

Pattaya bridge Club News-sheets 2004

Index

News-sheet No.

62	Responding to Partner's Negative Double
62	Responding 2♥ to partner's 1♠ opening
64	Questions and Alerts
65	Balancing, or protection
65-78	The Beginner's Page (Basic Standard American)
66	The 3NT rebid
69	Splinters
70	Systems on, Systems off.
70	Raising Partner's Major directly to 4 is weak
70	Tea and Cucumber sandwiches
70,71	A 5-3 fit or 3NT?
71	Responding to Partner's 1♥/♠ Opening
72	The Problem with Playing Tricks
72	When Partner Pauses and Passes
74	Responding with 5 ♠'s and 4 ♥'s
74	The 3NT rebid cont.
74	4 Card Majors – Dutch Acol is not Acol
75	When they interfere with our big bid
76	Return to Disneyland
76	Bidding the Fourth Suit (after LHO opponent's overcall) – is it a reverse?
76	That 3NT rebid yet again
77	Doubling a 1♠ opening with just 3 ♥'s?
77	How much is an honour worth? – a few Marty Bergen tips on hand evaluation.
77	How many points for a negative double of 1♠?
77	The Reverse
80	Gerber, Blackwood or quantitative 4NT?
80	The Gambling 3NT
81	Hans defends Jeff's atrocious bidding
83	John Gavens bites the dust
84	Support Doubles
86	When 1NT is doubled.
92	The strong jump shift
94	Chuck is finally chucked out
95	Chuck's final shot – what he really thinks of Terry
95	Benjamin Twos
96	Big hand bidding
98	Checkback Stayman or New Minor Forcing.
99	Defensive signals etc.
99	Pairs tactics
104	A World Champion's opinion of my 3♣ opening and Chuck's 4♣ raise.
106	Overcall or Double, which is the stronger bid?
106	The help-suit game try
106	Namyats (4♣ and 4♦ openings)
108	Understanding Blackwood and Gerber
109	Understanding Gerber even more

- 109 Lonley and touching honours
- 110 Our 1NT opening is overcalled – stolen bid.
- 111 Jordan 2NT
- 112 Jacoby 2NT
- 113 Support Doubles

Last week's winners: Monday 29/12/03

Friday 2/1/04

1 st	Larse/Arne	64%	1 st	Hans/Gary	63%
2 nd	Hans/Chuck	61%	2 nd =	Mike/Angela & Dave/Norman	53%

The hi-tech pest – mobile phones. I've never had one (who wants to phone me anyway). Would it be too much to ask if people could turn them off during our Bridge session? I know it's Christmas, but a loud rendering of Jinglebells just as you're about to execute a progressive squeeze without the count really is distracting.

I received a number of inputs as to which movement is preferred with 7 tables (thanks Martin, Gary and Hans). All said that they did not mind moving a lot and the Howell (two boards a round) is to be preferred. Hans also pointed out that it is fairer (every pair plays every other pair) and everybody has to come up against Chuck for two boards – there's no avoiding it now. Fine. I have to lose some weight and I guess that the rushing around will do me good? But will everybody please check that they have the correct boards. I also have a Howell movement for 8 tables which I will try. With 9+ tables we must have a Mitchell (N-S stationary), but with 9+ tables then I always give separate results for the N-S and E-W pairs.

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

Hand A	Hand B	What do you open with Hand A? 1 st seat, love all.
♠ 106	♠ AKQ9	
♥ 98	♥ 72	With Hand B you are dealer, vulnerable. Do you open?
♦ 6	♦ J2	
♣ AKJ108643	♣ J7643	
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C partner opens 1♠, what is your response?
♠ J102	♠ K84	
♥ KJ107	♥ Q764	With Hand D it's three passes to you. Do you open in 4 th seat?
♦ 832	♦ J83	
♣ A72	♣ AQ2	
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E you open 1♦, partner responds 1♠ and you rebid 2♣. What is your bid after partner replies 2♠?
♠ 83	♠ QJ4	
♥ KJ	♥ AJ	
♦ AQ1062	♦ KJ864	With Hand F partner opens 1NT (15-17), what is your response?
♣ KQ73	♣ K109	

Sequence G

- Is it Forcing?

W	N	E	S	East's double is negative. It promises 4(+) ♥'s and at least the values to compete to 2♥. Is 3♥ invitational or (game) forcing?
1♠	2♦	dbl(1)	pass	
3♥				

Bridge Book of the Year?

It's out! The best bridge book of 2003? It is, of course, the Pattaya Bridge Club Yearbook 2003. All the news, gossip (and some bridge) from 2003 at the world's most dynamic bridge club. Order your First Edition now, don't be disappointed.

Responding to Partner's Negative Double

It looks like this is a topic that needs covering as one of our leading players (Chuck!!) was apparently confused over a hand I covered last week? :-

West	North	East	South	
-	-	pass	pass	
pass	1♠	2♦	dbl (1)	(1) Negative, promising 4♥'s
pass	3♥ (2)		(2) game invitational

A quite straightforward bidding sequence, what's more there are no if's, but's or maybe's about it. The double at (1) guarantees 4+ ♥'s, it shows the values to (at least) compete to 2♥. North should respond in a similar way to what he would if South had responded 1♥ to a 1♣/♦ opening. So 2♥ is weak support, 3♥ is invitational and 4♥ is a raise to game. Easy.

At least I think it's easy. Let's start at the beginning and explain the responses to negative doubles ... what is a Negative Double? It is a *specific* type of take-out double and there is only one scenario – partner opens, RHO overcalls and a double by you is called a negative (or Sputnik) double. Doubles in similar scenarios may well be for take-out, but they are not called negative doubles.

Negative doubles can be played in various different ways, and I shall differentiate between what is common and what is mandatory. In principle, a negative double promises the two unbid suits. What is most commonly played (and the style I prefer) is that a negative double only promises the (unbid) major(s). If there is just one unbid major then a negative double guarantees 4+ cards in that major (mandatory) and says nothing about the other suits (common). If both majors are unbid (e.g. 1♣ - 1♦ - dbl, 1♦ - 2♣ - dbl) then the negative double shows both majors (but one of them 3 card is commonly allowed). If both majors have been bid (e.g. 1♥ - 1♠ - dbl, 1♠ - 2♥ - dbl) then the negative double shows both minors.

OK, but how does opener reply? Let's take the sequence 1♣ - 1♠ - dbl for our example. Dbl is a negative double, promising 4♥'s and is unlimited in strength (commonly played) – exactly the same as if there had been no overcall and responder had bid 1♥. Opener responds to the negative double in exactly the same way as he would to a 1♥ bid: -

2♥ = min 3♥ = invitational 4♥ = to play.

The only difference is that 4♥ may have pre-emptive overtones (it is a sound 18-19 points with no intervention). The reason for this is that if opener has a big hand with slam interest then he can cue bid the opponent's suit.

It may look like it, but 1♣ - 1♠ - dbl - pass - 2♥ is not a reverse, it is simply supporting partner at the lowest level. And 3♥ is not a jump reverse, it is invitational support for partner's suit.

Double for Penalties?

Board 15 from Friday 26th, N-S vul

Dealer:	♠ A94	West	North	East	South
South	♥ AJ7	-	-	-	pass
N-S vul	♦ 54	pass	pass	1♠	pass (1)
	♣ 97632	1NT	pass	pass (2)	2♦ (3)
♠ Q	N	pass (4)	pass	2♠ (5)	all pass
♥ 10832	W E				
♦ AJ72	S				
♣ 10854					
	♠ K72				
	♥ 965				
	♦ 109863				
	♣ AQ				

1NT made +1 at another table, 2♠ went minus 1 here for a bottom score to E-W. Could anything be done after South decided to stick his oar in? Let's analyse the bidding: -

Everything is obvious up to East's pass at (2). Normally it is best to correct to 2 of your major with a 6 card suit, but with so many points outside pass was an excellent choice. Well bid Gary. And what about South's 2♦ at (3)? This is a balancing bid, he knows that North must have some values and bidding a 5 card suit is normally a good bet – don't give the opposition an easy ride in just 1NT at pairs scoring.

Now we come to the crunch, what should West do at (4)? He has heard South pass initially and also fail to overcall at (1), South must be balancing with a miserable hand with a 5 card ♦ suit, partner (East) must have at least 2 ♦'s (or he would not have passed 1NT). Thus N-S probably have just a 5-2 (possibly 5-1 or even 5-0!) ♦ fit. With AJxx sitting over the bidder, double! What's more, if you don't double then you 'know' that partner will bid 2♠ - your hand is miserable in ♠'s; with a mis-fit, defend! And if they are doubled, even the better! It is virtually impossible to construct a hand for East where he can pass 1NT but 2♦ by South will make (please don't bother to invent one for me). And what about East's 2♠ bid at (5)? I think it's automatic. East's bidding was perfect.

2♦ probably goes 2 off, so +500 for E-W on a partscore hand, not to be sneezed at? Even 1 off gets the magic +200. You really have to aim for this at pairs scoring.

Nice bid again, Gary

Board 11 from Friday 2nd, love all.

North	South (E)	North (me)	South
♠ AQ10972	♠ 83	-	1♦
♥ 9832	♥ KJ	1♠	2♣ (1)
♦ K	♦ AQ1062	2♠ (2)	4♠ (3)
♣ 84	♣ KQ73	pass	

I bid this one with Gary (South). 2♣ at (1) is correct, the hand is not good enough for a forcing 3♣. I prefer 2♠ at (2) to 2♥ as the ♥ suit is miserable and the ♠ suit is excellent. 2♥ would, in any case, be 4th suit forcing. 4♠ at (3) is an excellent bid. North has shown values and a decent 6 card ♠ suit.

Responding in a new suit at the two level

Board 14 from Monday 29th, love all

When playing a strong NT you need 11 points (or a very good 10) to respond in a new suit at the two level. I say this week after week, but we still get the occasional transgression: -

North (C)	South	<u>Table A</u>		<u>Table B</u>	
		North	South	North	South
♠ J102	♠ AQ974				
♥ KJ107	♥ 86				
♦ 832	♦ AK9	-	1♠	-	1♠
♣ A72	♣ J63	2♠ (1)	pass	2♣ (1) ... and on to 3NT	

The board was played 6 times on Monday, the bidding was as Table A 4 times, 2♠ usually made +1 for a score of +140. At another table North responded 1NT at (1), it made scoring +90. At Table B they got too high (3NT was -1), 3NT (or 4♠) is a very poor contract and 3NT scored the deserved bottom, anyone to blame?

It is, of course, North's bid at (1) that is the deciding factor. 9 points and two tens, what are the possibilities? 1NT, 2♥, 2♣, or 2♠? Let's see: -

- 1NT 6-9(10) points, balanced. A reasonable option, but see (d).
- 2♥ a decent ♥ suit, so bid it? No, unfortunately 2♥ guarantees a 5 card suit (and this hand is too weak in any case).
- 2♣ so bid 2♣ then? With a bit more power and/ or better shape, that would be fine. A new suit is a good 10+ points, this is totally flat (deduct 1 point). It is nowhere near good enough for a new suit two level response.
- 2♠ got there at last, the correct bid. With respectable 3 card support and a weak suit (♦'s), 2♠ is to be preferred to 1NT. Support with support. Well bid the four North's who got it right. You see, 4 correct bids (and one – 1NT – that's not too bad) out of six times is pretty good; perhaps some people do take note of what I say in the news sheets? It makes it all worthwhile.

It's easy to see why 2♣ is a poor bid. If South proceeds with 2NT (seems right to me) what does North do? He simply has losing options, would 3♠ be forcing then? Do not respond with a new suit at the 2 level if you cannot cope with a 2NT rebid, this North hand certainly cannot even though South is absolutely max for his 2NT bid.

Once North has overbid with 2♣ then game is inevitable unless he passes 2NT, South has a good 14 points and decent cards in partner's 'suit'. I don't know how the bidding proceeded at table B, it's irrelevant anyway, the mistake was made at (1).

Responding 2♥

I touched on this above, let's discuss it in more detail. If partner opens 1♠ and you have values for a two level bid (11+ playing a strong NT, 8+ playing a weak NT), then you can bid a new suit. However, a 2♥ bid takes up a lot of bidding space and so is reserved specifically for when you have 5 or more ♥'s (then opener knows that he can support with just 3 ♥'s). If you have only 4 ♥'s, then bid a minor suit. If there is a ♥ fit, then partner will always bid his 4 card ♥ suit.

A Pre-emptive opener?

North 17 from Friday 2nd, love all, dealer North

Hand A

♠ 106
♥ 98
♦ 6
♣ AKJ108643

So what do you open as dealer? I guess that the options are pass 1♣, 3♣ or 4♣? Now if this was a major suit then a 4-level opening would be correct. However I do not like opening 4♣ or 4♦ with this type of hand – you have by-passed 3NT which may well be the best contract (I like to play 4♣/♦ as Texas transfers). So pass, 1♣ or 3♣? I don't really like 1♣ and pass is probably technically correct. I opened 3♣ and partner bid a pushy 3NT which made (this underlines what I said about opening 4♣).

An Opening Bid?

Board 21 from Friday 2nd, N-S vul.

North (B)	South	North	South
♠ AKQ9	♠ J	1♣	1♦
♥ 72	♥ A963	1♠	4NT
♦ J2	♦ AKQ7	5♦	6NT (1)
♣ J7643	♣ AQ85	pass	

This was the bidding at one table on Friday. 6NT made comfortably, although South could bid 6♣ at (1). All three other tables settled for 3NT(+3 or 4), I guess that North did not open? Once North opens with 1♣ the South hand improves and should certainly look for slam. I would certainly open the North hand, it conforms with the rule of 20 and has 10 points concentrated in the two long suits, a sound opener in any position.

An Opening Bid in 4th seat?

Board 12 from Friday 2nd, N-S vul.

Dealer:	♠ Q932	West	North	East	South (D)
West	♥ 953				
N-S vul	♦ AQ105	pass	pass	pass	pass (1)
	♣ 54				

♠ J107	N	♠ A65
♥ A2	W E	♥ KJ108
♦ K972	S	♦ 62
♣ J1063		♣ K987

This hand was passed out just once on Friday. The other two times N-S landed in 1NT and 2♦, both just making.

♠ K84
♥ Q764
♦ J83
♣ AQ2

I always look at the board when it has been passed out, I usually find one hand that I would have opened; but not on this occasion: - Obviously the first three hands pass, but should South open in 4th seat? It has 12 points and conforms to the rules of

20 and 15. However, only the rule of 15 (points + ♠ length) is really relevant for 4th seat openers, I would deduct a point for the poor shape (and lack of intermediates and poor ♠ suit and only 2 points in the 'long' suit and pathetic ♦'s) and pass. The contracts both made because of the fortunate lie of both minor suit kings (in fact just about everything lies well for South). Swap the E-W hand and South loses a few 100 on the deal. Unlucky (Mike/Angela), I agree with your decision to pass it out. A dubious opener, especially vulnerable.

A Bad Hand for the Weak NT?

Board 19 from Friday 2nd, E-W vul.

North	South	North	South		
♠ A753	♠ KQ2	-	1NT (1)	(1) 12-14	
♥ 3	♥ 107	2♣ (2)	2♦ (3)	(2) Stayman	
♦ AK92	♦ J10654	2NT	3NT	(3) no 4 card major	
♣ 9754	♣ AKJ	pass			

This was the bidding at one table on Friday. 3NT lost the first 5 ♥ tricks, luckily(?) they split 5-5. Anyone to blame? I don't think so, I can't see that anyone can bid anything else? Playing a strong NT the bidding goes 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♠ etc and sensible contracts of 4♠ and 5♦ were reached at two other tables.

Incidentally, how would you play the hand in 4♠ after a ♥ lead and continuation? You should discard (a ♣) from the North hand on the second ♥! If you ruff then you will be in difficulties later if trumps are not 3-3. The defence cannot now continue with a 3rd round of ♥'s as you can ruff in the South hand. This is called keeping control (the opposite of losing control!). I note that the one pair playing in 4♠ made +2, I guess that they ignored this safety play? Luckily ♠'s were 3-3.

At one table the bidding was 1♦ - 3♦ - pass. South later asked me how he could have investigated the best game. Actually, North should respond 1♠ of course, but after 3♦ South should press on. Best is to look for 3NT and a 3♠ bid here shows a stopper and asks partner to bid 3NT with a ♥ stopper. North would then bid 4♦ (no ♥ stopper) and South can then bid a fairly confident 5♦ as he knows that there are not wasted ♥ values opposite.

A Poor 6NT

Board 10 from Friday 2nd, both vul.

West (F)	East	West	East		
♠ QJ4	♠ AK5	-	1NT (1)	(1) 15-17	
♥ AJ	♥ 765	4NT (2)	5♠	(2) aces?	
♦ KJ864	♦ A1053	6NT	pass		
♣ K109	♣ A75				

Minus two, with no realistic chances of making. 4NT was asking for aces (I prefer 4NT as quantitative here, with 4♣ as the ace ask). So who overbid? Actually I think that they both did. I would not open 1NT (although I suspect that most people would). A totally flat 15 count with poor intermediates and only 4 points in the long suit, I would call this a 14 count. Anyway, 1NT is not too bad and would be the choice of many (most?). The real problem is West's push to slam. To make 6NT you generally need about 33 points (and 37 points for 7NT) unless you have a good long suit. Even a quantitative 4NT is an overbid with this West hand.

Bidding Quiz Answers

Hand A:	I prefer pass or 3♣. I guess that some may open 1♣. I do not like 4♣.	Hand E:	4♠
Hand B:	1♣	Hand F:	3NT
Hand C:	2♠	Sequence G:	Invitational.
Hand D:	I would pass.		

Last week's winners: Monday N-S 1st Dave/Norman 66% E-W 1st Hans/Chuck 60%
 Friday 1st Chuck/Terry 72% 2nd Tomas/Per 63%

It's peak season again, 9 tables on Monday and 7½ on Friday. I had the undoubted pleasure of partnering Chuck on Friday, so some interesting bidding material this week.

Before we start on the Bridge, some current affairs. All of the 'do-gooders' in the world seem to be upset about the plight of the poor terrorists held captive in Cuba. If they are unhappy with American justice then it's simple – ship them back to Afghanistan for a quick trial and sentence there. And I don't see that the fact that a few are British, US or Australian nationals or whatever is at all relevant. Their crimes were committed in Afghanistan – let them face justice there from the people they suppressed and terrorised.

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

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A partner opens 1 ♠, do you respond?
♠ 983	♠ AJ10983	
♥ K32	♥ AK52	With Hand B RHO opens 1 ♦. Do you double or bid
♦ Q1092	♦ 73	1 ♠? Suppose you choose to double, LHO bids 2 ♣,
♣ 654	♣ 8	partner bids 2 ♥ and RHO bids 3 ♣. What now?
Hand C	Hand D	
♠ KQ76	♠ A53	What do you open with Hand C?
♥ A87	♥ A962	
♦ A73	♦ AKQ	What do you open with Hand D?
♣ Q76	♣ J73	
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E you open 1 ♣, LHO overcalls 2 ♠ and
♠ A2	♠ K5	this is passed round to you. You play Negative doubles,
♥ AK72	♥ 10954	RHO was unsure if the bid was intermediate or weak.
♦ Q86	♦ 96	What do you do?
♣ 10875	♣ Q7543	With Hand F partner opens 1 ♦, do you respond?
Hand G	Hand H	What do you open with Hand G? Suppose that you open 1 ♦ and
♠ A92	♠ KJ92	partner bids 1 ♠, what is your bid now?
♥ KJ9	♥ K2	With Hand H partner opens 1 ♥ and you bid 1 ♠.
♦ AQ1073	♦ K98	(a) partner rebids 2 ♦, what would you bid?
♣ A8	♣ K1082	(b) partner rebids 2 ♠, what would you bid?
Hand J	Hand K	With Hand J RHO opens 1NT (15-17). What's your bid?
♠ AQ94	♠ A1043	With Hand K partner opens 1 ♥ and you bid 1 ♠.
♥ K543	♥ A6	(a) partner rebids 2 ♦, what would you bid?
♦ AQ	♦ 6542	(b) partner rebids 3 ♦, what would you bid?
♣ 972	♣ 653	

Is it Strong, Weak, Forcing or whatever?

What type of hand does the last bid in these sequences show? No intervention.

- Sequence L: 1♦ - 1♠ - 2NT - 3♦?
- Sequence M: 1♦ - 1♠ - 2NT - 3♦ - 3♠? and how many ♠'s?
- Sequence N: 1♦ - 1♠ - 2NT - 3♠? and how many ♠'s?
- Sequence P: 1♦ - 1♠ - 3♦? and how many ♦'s?
- Sequence Q: 1♦ - 1♠ - 3♠? and how many ♠'s?

It looks like a lot of players need to brush up/agree what's what after a 2NT or jump rebid. *Five* pairs missed an *easy* game with 26 points and *two* fits! (see next page).

Double 1NT?

Board 1 from Monday 5th, love all

The board was played 9 times but this auction occurred only twice. I checked, and eight of the nine N-S pairs played a strong NT, so why were more auctions not the same? North had a solid balanced 16 count, an obvious 1NT opener.

West	East (J)	West	North	East	South
♠ 1083	♠ AQ94	-	1NT	dbl	pass
♥ Q872	♥ K543	pass	pass		
♦ 653	♦ AQ				
♣ KQ6	♣ 972				

I would double 1NT with the East hand, I guess that 6 players did not? And if partner does double 1NT

then West should certainly pass – it is not for take-out unless you play DONT. And one interesting point that I noticed – Jeff and Alex are the only players that I know who play DONT and yet they were one of the two pairs who defended 1NT doubled! Did somebody forget the system? Or have they realized the wisdom of what I said about DONT and changed to Multi Landy? They scored a top on the board (1NT dbld -2). I suppose that if you play Landy or some defence that has a bid to shows both majors then that's what some would choose (but I prefer 9 cards in the majors); I would not make such a bid with 15+ points. Double!

A Solid Overcall!

Board 5 from Friday 19th Dec, N-S vul

East	West	North	East	South
♠ AKQJ6				
♥ AKQ53	-	-	-	pass
♦ KQ	pass	1♦	1♠ (1)	pass
♣ 3	pass	pass		

Two (!) pairs overcalled just 1♠ with this East hand on Friday 19th and played there. So what is the correct bid? If you do not play Michaels Cue Bids then 2♦ is the bid at (1). This is traditionally a very strong bid (too strong for a double). If you play Michaels, then you have to double (unless you play that Michaels may be weak or strong); I have frequently said that a double should be playable in the other three suits – but that is not necessary if the hand is strong enough to bid again after partner's response. And what should you do after you double(or bid 2♦) and partner bids his inevitable ♣ suit? Bid ♦'s, partner will hopefully get the message and bid his best major. You then raise him to game. What happened? 1♠ made the obvious +4. 4♥ was bid and made (+1) twice.

What's Your rebid?

Board 20 from Monday 5th, E-W vul.

West	East (G)	West	East
♠ K8754	♠ A92	pass	1♦
♥ Q64	♥ KJ9	1♠	? (1)
♦ K952	♦ AQ1073		
♣ 5	♣ A8		

The East hand is far too strong for a 1NT opener and so 1♦ is correct, but what do you rebid at (1)? After partner responds you want to go to game. Neither 3♦ nor 3♠ are forcing (anyway, 3♠ promises 4 card ♠ support and 3♦ promises 6 ♦'s – the hand is far too good for either in any case). A semi-balanced 18 count, so 2NT? Quite acceptable, but is there a forcing bid? (it's a nice 18 count with good ♠'s for partner and I don't want to play in 2NT). An equally good alternative (that I prefer) is 2♥ provided that you play this reverse as forcing. Normally I hate to 'lie' in a major, but it's OK here. If partner supports ♥'s then he must have 5 ♠'s! 4♠ is then easily reached. Also, the 2♥ bid guarantees 5 ♦'s (a ♦ slam may be on).

And what happened? 3NT was reached (and went down) twice, deservedly so. If East bids 2NT then it's best to play any bid by West as forcing except a return to his suit (3♠). West's best bid is 3♦, then East should bid 3♠ (forcing, showing 3 ♠'s) and West bids 4♠. 3♦ was reached twice, 3♠ once and 5♦ (making) once. And the top score was 4♠ (+1) which was bid three times. This best contract was bid by two visiting pairs and Alex/Jeff. One distinguished home pair languished in 3♦. It does not matter how well you play the cards, making 12 tricks in 3♦ does not score well. Maybe they need to brush up on what's forcing? One could do worse than referring to news-sheet 56. Always willing to help, my suggested bidding sequence(s) are: -

1♦ - 1♠ - 2NT- 3♦ - 3♠ - 4♠ or 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♥ - 2♠ - 4♠

A Strong 2♥ opener? - 1

Board 23 from Monday 5th, both vul

Dealer:	♠ KJ863		
South	♥ 7542		
both vul	♦ -		
	♣ 10942		
♠ A954	N	♠ Q107	
♥ Q3	W E	♥ 8	
♦ 10985	S	♦ J7642	
♣ AQJ		♣ K865	
	♠ 2		
	♥ AKJ1096		
	♦ AKQ3		
	♣ 73		

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
dbl	3♥	pass	4♥
pass	pass	pass	

This was the auction I witnessed at one table, quite reasonable. This N-S pair, however, play Benjamin twos and I would certainly open the south hand with 2♣. Anyway 4♥ was easily reached at 8 tables. But why have I included the E-W hands? I have no idea what

happened, but one distinguished home team pair bid 4♠ at the 9th table on the E-W cards – vulnerable! Minus 1100 scored zero matchpoints. Did East bid too high (3♠) after North's 3♥? Check on the Law (of Total Tricks) and tell me about it sometime, guys.

A Strong 2♥ opener? - 2Board 12 from Monday 5th, N-S vul.

North	South	North	South
♠ K93	♠ A	pass	1♥ (1)
♥ 5	♥ AKQ7432	2♦	3♥ (2)
♦ A109743	♦ 62	pass (3)	
♣ J92	♣ A76		

This was the bidding at one table on Monday, one other pair even managed to stop in 2♥! 4♥ was bid at the other 7 tables, making +1 or +2. So how should the bidding go? The South hand has 9 playing tricks; some people believe that when one trick short of game in your own hand, open your strongest bid (2♣, or 2♦ playing Benjamin). I don't like that, I prefer more high card strength for 2♣/♦ (partner may go slamming). The hand is also too strong for a 4♥ opening. Playing Benjamin I would open 2♣ and playing strong twos then 2♥. Playing Standard American I prefer 1♥ to 2♣. But then what do you rebid at (2)? After partner has responded you have game values, you must bid game or make a forcing bid. I would bid 4♥, the ♥ suit is self-sufficient. Actually, after a 2-level response, 3♥ is forcing; but do you trust your partner?

A Strong 2♥ opener? - 3Board 17 from Monday 5th, love all.

North (K)	South	North	South
♠ A1043	♠ -	pass	1♥ (1)
♥ A6	♥ KQ9852	1♠	3♦ (2)
♦ 6542	♦ AQ987	pass	
♣ 653	♣ A8		

This was the bidding at more than one table on Monday. In fact the hand was played in a partscore 8 times! unbelievable? With the ♦K inside doubleton and ♥'s 3-2, 13 tricks were there for the taking. So how should the bidding go to reach just 4♥? Again, the opening bid? Way short of a strong 2♣/♦, and I would not even open a strong 2♥. It's not good enough and two-suiters are usually best bidden slowly, 1♥ is fine. With a ♠ void, this will never be passed out. And at (2)? 3♦ is OK, but this bid is *game* forcing – North cannot pass! Even if South had made a more conservative 2♦ rebid at (2) this North hand should give false preference to 2♥ which South would raise to 4♥. 8 tables out of 9 missing game must be some sort of record when a grand slam is cold?

No other sensible auction?Board 3 from Monday 5th, E-W vul.

West	East (H)	West	East
♠ 1087	♠ KJ92	1♥	1♠
♥ AQJ73	♥ K2	2♦ (1)	3NT
♦ AQ74	♦ K98	pass	
♣ 4	♣ K1082		

This was the bidding at 5 tables on Monday. I can see no other sensible auction, whatever system you play? Three pairs (including our distinguished home pair) managed to play in silly ♠ contracts, tell me about it sometime. Maybe West chose 2♠ at (1)?

It would not be my choice but I guess that it's reasonable? East, however, should then bid 3NT anyway because West may have just 3 ♠'s. 4♠ got what it deserved – minus 200.

Game with 20 points?Board 1 from Friday 9th, love all.

West	East (B) (Chuck)	West	North (me)	East	South
♠ K54	♠ AJ10983				
♥ Q763	♥ AK52	-	1♦	dbl (1)	2♣
♦ K108	♦ 73	2♥ (2)	3♣	4♥ (3)	pass
♣ 964	♣ 8	pass	pass		

What shall we say about the bidding? First of all, should East double or overcall 1♠ at (1)? This is probably a matter of partnership style. But if you are partnering Chuck it's best to let him have his fair share of being declarer (I had already been declarer in two slams when this hand came up), so I chose double. Normally a double should promise all three unbid suits, but I have discussed this with Chuck before when I did not double with a similar hand and he said that it's fine on hands like this with two good majors, one of which is very good. I always go along with my partner's style, even if I don't totally agree.

I think that 4♥ at (3) is fine. You have shortage in both of the opponent's suits, the ♠ suit is excellent (texture) and partner's free bid at (2) promises values (unlike if South had not bid when a 2♥ bid could be zero points). In this particular case, the opposition bidding made it easy to reach the excellent game on minimal values.

And what happened? ♦A was offside but ♠Q was singleton and so 4♥ (or 4♠) rolled home. Game (4♠) was reached at two other tables and the contract was 2♠ (+2) at three tables. It did not matter on this particular deal, but imagine the same West hand with ♦A instead of the ♦K. Then 4♥ would make +2 but 4♠ would make just +1. Always look for good 4-4 fits. Even though you have more ♠'s the 4-4 fit is often best as you get discard(s) on the long ♠ suit.

A Strong 1NT opener?Hand East 12 from Friday 9th

Hand C A balanced 15 points so a 1NT opener?

♠ KQ76	You know me by now. This hand is totally flat with no intermediates.
♥ A87	Treat it like a 14 count and open 1♣ (or a weak NT if that's what you
♦ A73	play). What you do not want is to open a strong NT and hear partner
♣ Q76	raise to 2NT – you may well go down.

Pass partner's opening 1♦?Board 2 from Monday 5th, E-W vul.

West (F)	East	West	East
♠ K5	♠ Q93	-	1♦ (1)
♥ 10954	♥ A876	pass	
♦ 96	♦ AQ52		
♣ Q7543	♣ K2		

This result caught my eye as 1♦ is a silly contract. The pair were playing a strong NT so quite why East opened 1♦ I don't know. Anyway, I would never pass 1♦ with the West hand (although some would). I've been all through that before. 1♦ was minus 1 and 1NT or 2♥ made.

What is that 4♣ bid?

Board 5 from Friday 9th, N-S vul.

West	East	West (Chuck)	East (me)
♠ 94	♠ A	-	1♥
♥ A763	♥ KJ9852	2♦ (1)	3♦ (2)
♦ AK97	♦ J10643	3♥ (3)	4♣ (4)
♣ QJ9	♣ A	4♦ (4)	4♠ (4)
		6♥	pass

I play 2/1 with Chuck and this sequence shows why it is a fine system, especially when slam is in the air – you establish a game force early (at a low level) and can cue bid away or whatever to your heart's content. 2♦ at (1) is game forcing. Jacoby 2NT is another option but I quite like this sequence. 3♦ at (2) agreed ♦'s, but 3♥ at (3) set ♥'s as trumps. Playing Standard American you would have to agree if it's forcing or not – just another reason why I like 2/1, forcing sequences really are clear. 4♣ at (4) was a cue bid (showing 1st round control) as were the 4♦ and 4♠ bids. 6♥ was easily reached.

And what happened? ♦'s behaved so it made +1. Just one other pair reached 6♥ and one reached a decent 6♦. Two played in 4/5♥ but the one pair who reached 5♦ obviously have not read my news-sheets about 5 of a minor not usually scoring much at pairs (it scored a zero here).

What is that 4♣ bid again?

Board 10 from Friday 9th, both vul.

West	East (D)	West (Chuck)	East (me)
♠ Q	♠ A53	-	1NT (1)
♥ KQJ1085	♥ A962	2♦ (2)	3♥ (3)
♦ J9875	♦ AKQ	4♣ (4)	4♦ (5)
♣ K	♣ J73	6♥ (6)	pass

Not such plain sailing this time, but we got there: -

- (1) We play a 15-17 NT but all of you who know me know that I deduct a point for a totally flat hand. Also, the ♦AKQ is not worth 9 points (♦AKQx would be). So 1NT.
- (2) transfer
- (3) A super accept. We play this as 4 trumps and a maximum, the super-accept to 3 of the trump suit denies a weak doubleton in our style.
- (4) oops! Chuck meant this as Gerber (ace ask), I took it as a cue bid.
- (5) Cue bid.
- (6) I guess the aces are irrelevant, so bid the slam anyway? Actually, 4NT here would be the ace ask.

After the hand Chuck agreed to swing along with Frank Sinatra and do it my way: -

- 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 4♣ asks for aces (RKCB)
- 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 4NT is quantitative
- 1NT - 2♦ - 3♥ - 4♣ is a cue bid (the same for any super-accept)
- 1NT - 2♦ - 3♥ - 4NT asks for aces (RKCB)

Basically, if NT is a possible resting place then 4♣ is the ace ask (RKCB with us). When the suit is agreed then 4NT is RKCB.

Trust Partner?Board 11 from Friday 9th, love all.

West	East (A)	West	North	East (me)	South
♠ 10	♠ Q954	-	-	-	pass
♥ Q93	♥ AK72	pass (1)	1♦	dbl	pass
♦ K1074	♦ -	2NT (2)	pass	3NT (3)	pass
♣ AQ1073	♣ KJ852	pass	pass		

Many people would open the West hand. It conforms to the rule of 20 and has the points in the long suits. Chuck, however, is a very solid opener and with a singleton ♠ you 'know' that the hand will not be passed out so you get another chance later. If you open, you may have a rebid problem. It was all quite straightforward after the initial pass (I prefer Chuck's 2NT to 3♣ at (2) – it's pairs). But what should East bid at (3)? West has denied a major suit and so probably has ♣'s. But he did not bid them! He promised a ♦ stop(s) and knows that you are short in the suit, so put him to the test?!

And what happened? 3NT made +1 for a virtual top. Two pairs were in a reasonable 5♣ and two others in a not so reasonable 4♥ (-1). I won't mention the N-S pair who sacrificed in 5♦ doubled (-1100). Obey the law, 9 combined trumps is not enough to compete at the 5 level when you have less than the balance of the points. Now this 4♥ contract is quite interesting; often a 4-3 fit is quite playable, but not when you have to ruff in the hand with long trumps – you lose control. And the hand is best played by West, not just because Chuck is a good declarer, but the ♦K needs protecting from the opening lead.

Raise Partner's Major?

Board 17 from Friday 9th, love all.

West (A)	East	West (Chuck)	North	East (me)	South
♠ 983	♠ AK764				
♥ K32	♥ AJ9	-	pass	1♠	pass
♦ Q1092	♦ J	1NT (1)	pass	3♣ (2)	pass
♣ 654	♣ KQJ9	4♠ (3)	pass	pass	pass

(1) 5-12 points, any shape, forcing (for one bid).

(2) game forcing

(3) vroom.., fast arrival.

So, would you raise partner's 1♠ opening to 2♠ with that West hand? For most people, certainly not! A 2♠ bid at (1) is normally 6-9(10) points with either 3 or 4 card support. This is quite a large range and you should not confuse the issue by raising on rubbish like this! However, things are different when you play 2/1. There are two different ways to raise partner's major to the two level – either directly (a decent raise) or via the forcing NT (a not-so-decent raise); this hand just about(?) qualifies for the latter.

3♣ at (2) is obviously forcing (we play game forcing) and so 4♠ at (3) shows a weak raise (fast arrival). 3♠ at (3) would be forcing and show a better hand with slam interest.

And what happened? 4♠ made exactly. 1♠ was passed out 3 times and 3NT (making) was reached just once.

Bidding Quiz Answers

Hand A: pass. Unless you play 2/1 when you can bid a pushy forcing 1NT.

Hand B: 1♠ is probably technically correct, but I prefer double. If you double and partner makes a free bid of 2♥, then raise to 4♥.

Hand C: 1♣ (or a weak NT), that's all it's worth. What's more, Chuck agrees.

Hand D: 1NT (15-17), that's all it's worth.

Hand E: Double. If you play negative doubles then it is usually correct to re-open with a double in case partner has a penalty pass.

Hand F: 1♥. If you pass, 1♦ will probably be a miserable contract.

Hand G: Open 1♦. A 2NT rebid is fine, but I slightly prefer 2♥ if you play that as forcing. 3♠ and 3♦ are both incorrect (promising 4♠'s and 6♦'s resp). They are also underbids and are non-forcing.

Hand H: (a) 3NT

(b) 3NT (pard may have just 3♠'s). Partner will correct to 4♠ if he has 4♠'s.

Hand J: Double (penalties).

Hand K: (a) 2♥. Give (false) preference unless you have a real heap and a definite preference for ♦'s when you can pass. This hand is far too good to pass; 3♦ is a reasonable bid but I prefer 2♥, especially at pairs scoring.

(b) 3♥. Partner's 3♦ is *forcing*. I prefer 3♥ to 4♦.

Sequence L: 3♦ is (game) forcing.

Sequence M: So 3♠ is still game forcing, promising 5♠'s.

Sequence N: 3♠ is the only weak bid (except pass) over 2NT here. It promises 5♠'s.

Sequence P: 3♦ is strong, but only invitational. It promises 6♦'s.

Sequence Q: 3♠ is strong, but only invitational. It promises 4♠'s.



Last week's winners: Monday 12/1/04

Friday 16/1/04

N-S 1 st Alex/Jeff	57 %	E-W 1 st Arne/Larse	71 %	1 st Paul/Joe	70%
N-S 2 nd Age/Villy	56 %	E-W 2 ⁿ Odd/Bjarne	63 %	2 nd Chuck/Hans	58%

Just as well that Alex/Jeff are back in harness, it seems that they were the only home team pair to stop a complete Viking rout on Monday..

The Piltdown Men?

As is obvious to most members, our club has a very mixed standard. There are a few good players, but the vast majority are beginners or not-too-experienced. I was chatting to Kees and he asked if I could do anything about the antics of the 'cavemen' at the table next to him on Monday. Perhaps these 'superior players' should just try playing cards for enjoyment instead of continually being rude to each other and repeatedly calling the director? More of this later.

It is noticeable that we have a large number of visiting Norwegians who are undoubtedly excellent players (they certainly seem to stomp all over the home 'experts' every Monday), yet none of these seem to have to repeatedly call me over. *More than 50%* of director calls are made from the table of *one* specific individual. Silly? More of this later

Bidding Quiz

Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A you open 1 ♠ and partner bids 2 ♥ . What do you bid?
♠ KQJ86	♠ 54	
♥ QJ10	♥ 9653	With Hand B LHO opens 1 ♦ and partner doubles. What do you bid?
♦ AKJ	♦ AQ974	
♣ 104	♣ 53	
Hand C	Hand D	What do you open with hand C?
♠ Q109753	♠ -	
♥ KQ43	♥ AKQ73	
♦ 2	♦ A42	What do you open with hand D?
♣ A5	♣ AKJ52	
Hand E	Hand F	What do you open with hand E?
♠ 103	♠ 2	
♥ AKJ2	♥ A	
♦ KJ2	♦ AK98764	With Hand F partner opens 2 ♠ , what is your reply?
♣ AK76	♣ J1062	
Hand G	Hand H	With Hand G partner opens 2NT (perhaps via 2 ♣ /♦ - it makes no difference). Anyway, he has a balanced hand with about 22 points. What do you bid?
♠ Q1043	♠ AKJ2	
♥ J1072	♥ K872	
♦ A4	♦ 6	With Hand H LHO opens 1 ♦ , what do you do?
♣ 1052	♣ KJ109	

Just doin' my 'job'?

A few minor problems last Monday. 9 tables with me playing – with one table outside. Most people realise that I am fairly busy in this scenario but this did not stop Alex/Jeff battling it out with Hans/Chuck and repeatedly calling me over to settle their silly disputes.

I was far too busy to know exactly what was going on, but this is the gist of it: -

Jeff refused to answer a 'what if' question posed by Chuck. Alex asked what Chuck's 1♦ opening was. Hans said that it showed 4+ cards. Chuck corrected Hans' incorrect explanation at an inappropriate time. Chuck thought that Alex's question was unethical - indicating that he himself had ♦'s (he did not). Chuck demanded that I check Alex's hand. Alex is upset that Chuck has been allowed back into the club but that Thorlief has not. Hans said that I was failing in my duty as director.....Enough! This really is too silly for four 'grown-ups'? Perhaps 'cavemen' is an apt description?

Rather than issue them with clubs to fight it out I will ensure that they play in the same direction next week(s) and so do not meet! Let's hope that they have all matured when the numbers come down and we are back to Howell movements.

Let's start with Chuck/Thorlief. There is no comparison. Thorlief behaved abysmally (repeatedly) and is most definitely banned for life and longer. Chuck simply had to adjust to playing in a club where the standard of play is not what he is used to. He misbehaved but has served his time. He appears to be a changed person now and knows what he will not get away with. Mind you, he has been a bit testy lately

Onto Chuck's complaints - If an opponent asks you a question about your partner's bidding or the system you play, you are obliged to answer (please translate if necessary, Alex). Chuck also got 'upset' when another opponent opened 1♣ with only 2♣'s and there was no alert. I've been all through this before. The prepared ♣ is common on continental Europe but not in the USA. The rules for alerts keep changing. In UK you have to alert if an opening 1NT is anything but 12-14 and if a 1♣ or 1♦ opening may be less than 4 cards. As the Brits outnumber the Yanks in our club then should I say that a 15-17 NT and all 1♣/♦ openings less than 4 card need alerting? And the club has a very large number of beginners, some would have no idea what an alert is or what you were talking about if you stated 'transfer'. The whole bridge world has gone crazy with the ever changing alert rules.

However, just to keep Chuck and a few others happy, I include some *guidelines* as to what I think is applicable to **this** club. But please don't bother to call out for the director if a bid is not alerted etc. And note that many continental players play a 1♣ opening that may be 2 cards; don't call me if it is not alerted, I'm not interested. I am also not interested if what I say is not current ACBL (or whatever) practice. It is just common sense.

And what if your partner gives an incorrect explanation of your bid? You should inform the opponents as soon as possible. If you are dummy or declarer that means after the bidding has finished but before the opening lead. If you are defending then you can say nothing until the hand is over. A stickler for the rules really should know this! Shouldn't he?

And as for me failing as a director? Possibly, everybody is entitled to their opinion and the World (at least Europe) is a democracy with freedom of expression. I have not taken a director's course – I took over the club(s) as there was nobody else and I have simply read a lot. Strange how a *number* of people have congratulated me on the way I run the clubs, the news sheets, etc. Anyway, if anybody feels that they can do better – then give it a go! I am more than willing to loan out my equipment etc to anybody who wants to run session(s). I would love to be able to simply play bridge without having all the hassle of directing the session, scoring, trivial director calls, no partner etc. I believe that Soi 4 can be booked virtually anytime. So instead of continually criticising – show us what **you** can do!

Questions and Alerts

Now even some relatively experienced players seem to have difficulty in recognising which bids should be alerted and which not. Indeed, as bidding develops, more bids become 'standard' and there is no need for an alert, whereas there would have been a few years ago. The 'rules' simply keep on changing. I will give a rough guide-line here of what I think is applicable to our club.

First of all, the NT range. The rules keep changing here, and at our club we have people playing both the strong and the weak NT. I think it's up to people to ask if you don't know the opponent's range. And 4 or 5 card majors, better minor or short ♣? Again, ask if you don't know. Easiest, of course, is for people to fill out a convention card. Anyway, I give a few tips here: -
The guide-lines I set out may not all be current practice, but are what I believe are applicable to our club. For example, splinters at the 4 level are not normally alerted; since very few play splinters at our club, I think all splinters should be alerted. What is current practice elsewhere may not be relevant to our club. Bear in mind that we have a large number of non-experienced players, be patient. *Most* players are here to enjoy themselves.

Alertable	Not Alertable
Stayman if it does not guarantee a 4 card major	Normal Stayman
Puppet Stayman and replies	
Transfers to minor(s)	Jacoby transfers to a major
Natural 2♦/♥/♠ to a 1NT opening	
A 1♣ opening if it may be 2 card	Possible 3 card 1♣/♦ openings
	Whether you play 4 or 5 card majors
Splinters	Cue bid of opponent's suit
4♣ (Gerber) if bid in a suit sequence	4♣ (Gerber) after a NT bid
	Any type of Blackwood
	Responses to Blackwood/Gerber
Strong Opening 2♦/♥/♠	Weak 2's
Multi 2♦ and subsequent conventional bids	
2♣ opening if other than 22/3+ or game forcing	2♣ opening if standard (22/3+ or g.f.)
low level direct penalty doubles	Negative (sputnik) doubles
Strong/Intermediate jump overcalls	Weak jump overcalls
Weak jump shifts	Strong jump shifts
Any bid which you think opponents need to know	A bid which partner may have forgotten

A note on questions. During the auction, you may ask questions (to the partner of the opponent who made the bid) *at your turn*. Unless it affects your action, I generally recommend not asking questions until the end of the auction. For example, do not ask opponents what type of Blackwood they are playing or how many Aces etc have been shown, wait until after the auction unless it affects a decision that you may make. It is also unwise to ask if a natural response to a 1NT opening is forcing (unless you intend to bid) as opponents may not know. If you are defending and you are on lead, then you should ask questions before leading. When you lead, it should always be face down and you say 'Questions partner?' or 'OK?'. Your partner may then ask questions before the opening lead is revealed. If you are not on lead and partner has a propensity to lead face up, then ask him to lead face down, especially if you have a question.

Calling me a liar!

Board 6 from Friday 9th Jan

Before we start, this section is rather advanced and beginners should perhaps ignore it. It has been included because of Chuck's **insistence!**

Now in the prolonged discussion with Hans/Chuck on Monday, Chuck said that I should include my own bad bids in the news sheets, and **in particular** that I should include my pass (which he said was a very poor bid) on board 6 of Friday 9th. So I intended to, but I thought that I would type up the hand (it is reproduced below) for Chuck's comment before I published it. I gave it to Chuck on Friday 16th and after 5 minutes he came back to me; saying that he had only bothered to read the first few lines! - because both the bidding and the hands were incorrect!! Now the board had not yet been re-shuffled from the previous Friday and I showed it to him – he said that I had clearly changed the board (he claims that the South hand had only 2 ♦'s). He also said that West did not double. Total crap of course, with no double from West then I obviously would simply bid 3NT with my North hand. I am used to Hans calling me a liar, but it appears that it is catching and Chuck is trying it too. *You are treading on thin ice, guys.* Anyway, according to Chuck, I not only re-arranged the hands in the board but I also lied about the bidding! Talk about conspiracy theories! Now as it happens, this board was played against Roy and Janine and Roy remembered the bidding and the hand – he most certainly recollected the bidding, his double, the fact that he held *exactly* ♦AQxxx and his partner ♦KJ doubleton and an ace. Since Roy is bigger than Chuck, I guess that's why Chuck did not also call him a liar?

Dealer:	♠ J1062		West	North	East	South
East	♥ AQ9			(me)		(Chuck)
Both vul	♦ 1075					
	♣ K86		-	-	pass	1NT (1)
			pass	2♣	pass	2♦
♠ 85	N	♠ A943	dbl	pass (2)	pass	pass
♥ 10753	W E	♥ 862				
♦ AQ982	S	♦ KJ				
♣ 52		♣ 10973		(1) 15-17		
	♠ KQ7					
	♥ KJ4					
	♦ 643					
	♣ AQJ4					

The contract went one down, 200 to E-W. 3NT went 2 down at other tables so also 200 to E-W.

Anyway, despite Chuck's protestations to the contrary, this is the **exact** hand and bidding. Chuck said that I should have bid 3NT at (2), I don't think so.

Let's check on what all of North's options at (2) mean: -

- redbl = we can make 2♦, teach 'em a lesson.
- 2♥ = weak, to play
- 2♠ = weak, to play
- 3♣ = whatever you play with no double
- 3♥ = whatever you play with no double (Chuck and I play Smolen)
- 3♠ = whatever you play with no double (Chuck and I play Smolen)

That, I hope, is all obvious, and leaves pass, 3♦, 2NT and 3NT.

I believe that a sensible use of these bids is: -

2NT = invitational, with a ♦ stop

3NT = to play, with a ♦ stop

pass = forcing (but not game forcing)

: opener should bid - 2NT = min with a ♦ stop, 3NT = max with a ♦ stop
or else his cheapest 3 card major with no stop.

3♦ = game forcing

: opener should bid - 3NT with a ♦ stop or else his cheapest 3 card major.

In the actual example, the bidding would then go: -

1NT	pass	2♣	pass
2♥	pass	2♠	all pass

You could choose to elaborate on this scheme along the Lebensohl principles: 2♦ forces a redouble and then all bids (2NT, 3NT, 3♥, 3♠) show a stop whereas the same bid directly denies a stop. There are numerous other permutations. I don't see that having pass showing a 4 card ♦ suit is at all sensible. Nor does pass as a suggestion to play in 2♦ doubled have any merit whatsoever (redouble!).

Chuck thinks that this is all nonsense. After a double he says that North should pass with 4♦'s, redouble with 5♦'s and bid NT with 3♦'s. Talk about nonsense!! Now perhaps Chicago citizens are used to taking a beating, but I am not (3NT goes minus two). So I asked Joe and Paul (Ire) what they would bid at (2). These two are certainly the best pair around at the moment and the best bidders (apart from myself, of course? - and Chuck on a good day?). They both agreed that it was a difficult problem and a situation that very few partnerships will have discussed. Joe favoured pass (the bid I found at the table) and Paul favoured 3♦ (my other choice – but is it game forcing? - I am not sure that the North hand is worth a game force when there is no major suit fit and ♦'s may not be stopped). But 3♦ is obviously best if partner is likely to pass 2♦ doubled! Anyway, broad agreement, and they both agreed with me that 3NT is silly and that the problem is far from trivial.

I asked Chuck if he would send the problem off to the bidding competition of his ACBL magazine. I got no comment – apparently with the hand and bidding given North should simply bid 3NT and happily go two down? Paul, Joe and myself are not of the same opinion.

Chuck may think it's trivial, but I have sent it off to an English bidding competition. Perhaps Paul could ask his peers when he returns to Ireland?

Incidentally, there is a fairly similar situation playing transfers: -

1NT	pass	2♦	dbl
?			

redouble shows good ♦'s and suggests the possibility of playing in 2♦ re-doubled, but pass simply shows 2♥'s and partner is expected to bid.

The bottom line? The double in the actual sequence was perhaps unwise – it gave N-S the opportunity to avoid 3NT (minus two) which would otherwise have automatically been bid. N-S should have been able to take advantage and not simply blunder into a 3NT contract when neither has a semblance of a ♦ stop.

The bottom bottom line. If you insist that I should write up a hand where you consider that I have made a poor bid, don't be surprised if it is not me who turns out to have made the bad bid. And don't try to wriggle out of it by alleging that I have altered the hands or the bidding (other people can remember too).

The Law again

Board 15 from Mon 12th, love all.

Apart from me apparently failing in my duties as a director, it appears that the news-sheets have much to be desired?? If I say a bid is bad, then Hans believes that I should demonstrate why. As it happens I have a fine example from last Monday and am only too pleased to oblige, and guess who the E-W pair were who conceded –300 on this part-score deal were? (Editor's note – Hans and Chuck.

Dealer: ♠ AQ982
South ♥ A5
N-S vul ♦ K983
 ♣ 63

♠ 75 N ♠ 1062
♥ KJ1096 W E ♥ Q42
♦ A2 S ♦ Q654
♣ KQ87 ♣ J109

 ♠ KJ4
 ♥ 873
 ♦ J107
 ♣ A542

Table A:

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

Table B:

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

Table C:

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

This board was played 9 times on Monday and there were a number of final contracts. 2♠ was reached 6 times and always made 9 tricks. Presumably the bidding was as Table A. Fine. But should E-W let N-S play in a comfortable 2♠? Of course not, especially when non-vulnerable – but who should make the push to 3♥? Now I went over this in considerable detail in news-sheet 31. It was virtually the same scenario; E-W have 8 trumps and should compete to the two level. However, it is permissible to go 'one too many' and the player to do this must be the one in the pass-out seat. West should not bid 3♥ at (2) – that would show 6♥'s.

So, should East bid 3♥ at (3)? Now this really is a miserable hand and some players would not even bid 2♥ at (2) (but they should). Anyway, you have possibly stretched by bidding 2♥ at (2) so why bid 3♥ at (3)? The answer is (as I said before) that it really has little to do with how good your hand is – it is the total number of trumps that count in these fairly evenly matched competitive situations. Pass is quite reasonable, but ardent followers of the law would bid 'one more'. Excellent. Now 3♠ at (4) is much the same. North suspects that his side has only 8 trumps, but with a nice hand it seems better to try for 9 tricks.

That should be an end to it! E-W have pushed N-S up to the 3 level with only 8 trumps – it may or may not make. One thing is for sure, E-W should certainly leave it there. Bidding 4♥ at (5) or at any time is suicidal. Now guess which pair did? Why, the very same pair who pooh-hooed this argument in news-sheet 31. Hans wants me to explain things – fine. But what's the point if people simply ignore what I say?

Explaining What I Say!

Board 20 from Mon 12th, both vul.

In news-sheet 62 I said that after partner opens 1♠, a response of 2♥ should guarantee 5♥'s. Here is an example of how it goes wrong if opener does not appreciate this: -

Dealer:	♠ KQJ86	West	North (A)	East	South
West	♥ QJ10				
both vul	♦ AKJ	pass (1)	1♠	pass	2♥
	♣ 104	pass	3♦ (2)	pass	3NT (3)
		pass	pass	pass	
♠ 72	N	♠ 10943			
♥ A95	W E	♥ 76			
♦ 2	S	♦ Q9876			
♣ J986532		♣ A7	(1) I can name a few who would open 3♣! Pass is the only sensible bid.		
	♠ A5				
	♥ K8432				
	♦ 10543				
	♣ KQ				

Well then? A rather silly 3NT was reached, why? After South's 2♥ response North most certainly has values for game. 3♦ is forcing, so bid that and wait and see? Unfortunately South is now in a quandary. Support ♠'s with ♠Ax? Raise to 4♦? Rebid a motley 5 card ♥ suit? 3NT with a ♣ stop? Nothing is really attractive and he chose the latter of the evils. Of course the fault lies with North; South's 2♥ bid guarantees 5♥'s – the problems faced by South because of the lack of bidding space shows why 2♥ should guarantee 5♥'s!! North has excellent ♥'s and must simply agree the suit. North should bid 4♥ unless you play 3♥ as forcing (it's not unless you agree).

And now onto the play. Obviously 3NT was hopeless and got the deserved bad score (it went -1), but it was not a complete bottom. Two other pairs reached the same silly 3NT but another pair managed to go -2 in 4♥! Now the key here is that declarer must think at trick one (later is too late!). You get the ♦2 lead in 4♥, what do you play from dummy?

Count your tricks. 4 ♠'s (probably 5), 4 ♥'s, 2 ♦'s and a ♣. So eleven. You can do nothing about the two missing aces, but with ample tricks you do not need the ♦ finesse! You have 11+ tricks without it! Of course, as the cards lie the defence will get a ♦ ruff if they defend perfectly (you win ♦A, lead a trump, West wins, over to East's ♣A and West gets a ♦ ruff). But you still have 10 absolutely cold tricks. Take the totally unnecessary ♦ finesse at trick one and you deserve the resulting minus two (and to be written up!). And, of course, should the ♦ finesse be necessary, you can always take it later.

What actually happened was horrendous! ♦2 lead won by the ♦Q, 6♦ back (low card requesting a ♣ - McKenney) and ruffed, over to ♣A, another ♦ ruff and the ace of trumps to cap it off.

The bottom lines?

- When you have enough tricks, don't take unnecessary risks. Take the lead and try to clear trumps. Think at trick one. Don't do prematurely what you can keep for later (if necessary).
- And in the bidding, a 2♥ response to a 1♠ opening promises 5♥'s. Opener should normally support with 3♥'s.

Responding to Partner's Double

Board 5 from Monday 12th, N-S vul.

North (B)	South (H)	West	North	East	South
♠ 54	♠ AKJ2	-	pass	1♦	dbl
♥ 9653	♥ K872	pass	2♦ (1)	pass	2♥
♦ AQ974	♦ 6	pass	pass	pass	
♣ 53	♣ KJ109				

The correct final contract, but West (Chuck) said what he thought of North's bidding when dummy came down – and asked me to write it up in the news-sheet! Here's the gist of it: - 2♦ at (1) cannot be natural. Very occasionally it is correct to pass for penalties when you hold a good solid suit, but that really is the exception – you do not often get rich by passing a take-out double of a 1 level contract when declarer sits over you. So with a ♦ suit it is usually best to bid 1NT (6-10 pts). But not if you have a 4 card major! And what should a 2♦ response at (1) mean? Equal length (normally 4-4) in the majors (thus giving partner a choice) and the values to at least compete to the two level. This North hand should simply respond 1♥.

2♥ was reached by most pairs and scored above average. Just one pair passed 1♦ doubled; it went minus one (100) but that's a bottom for N-S when they can collect +110 for 2♥.

A Mis-fit

Board 9 from Monday 12th, E-W vul.

North (C)	South (F)	North	South (me)
♠ Q109753	♠ 2	2♠ (1)	pass
♥ KQ43	♥ A		
♦ 2	♦ AK98764		
♣ A5	♣ J1062	(1) weak	

This board had an enormous range of final contracts, ranging from 6NT(!) to just 2♠. First of all, this was the bidding at one table. I don't like the 2♠ opener for two reasons – (a) the hand is too strong and (b) it contains a ♥ suit. Anyway, looking at the South hand, what would you bid if partner had opened 2♠? 3♦ is played as forcing by most pairs, the hand is a mis-fit, pass! But what should North open? I would open 1♠, a possible sequence is then 1♠ - 2♦ - 2♥ - 3♦ - pass. Nobody found this sequence, one other pair managed to stop in 2♠, four were in 3NT and then one each of 4♦ and 5♦.

This is a mis-fit hand, avoid NT (I've said that many times before). I agree that it's difficult to stop low, but 4♦(-1) is better than 3NT(-3).

And what happened? 2♠ made (or made +1), every other contract went down (4♦ got a good score at just -1). It looks like the declarer in 6NT played it well, it was only minus 5.

The bottom lines. Stop a.s.a.p. with mis-fits. Do *not* play mis-fits in NT.

Another Mis-fit?

Board 4 from Monday 12th, both vul.

West (D)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ -	♠ Q10542	2♣ (1)	pass	2♦	pass
♥ AKQ73	♥ 2	2♥	2♠ (2)	dbl (3)	pass
♦ A42	♦ QJ106	3♣ (4)	pass	3NT (5)	pass
♣ AKJ52	♣ 976	4♣ (6)	pass	4NT	all pass

This board again had an enormous range of final contracts, ranging from 6♥ (!) to just 2♥. This was the bidding at one table. I don't like the 2♣ opener for two reasons – (a) it's debatable if the hand is within one trick of game and (b) two suiters are best bid naturally.

I would open 1♥ (and subsequently jump to 3♣, game forcing). One big advantage of this approach is that you can show both suits if you get ♠ pre-emption from the opponents. There is virtually no chance of the hand being passed out when you are void in ♠'s. Anyway, who am I to disagree with West? So let's look at the rest of the auction.

North had a reasonable hand with ♠ AK987, but I don't like bidding here (2) and I would like a 6 card suit. If you wish to interfere with a strong 2♣ auction, then do so *at your first bid*, before opponents have had a chance to exchange information. Anyway, double at (3) was penalties – generally stating that East has no support for West's ♥ suit and believes that 2♠ doubled may be the best contract. If I was West with 3 aces and two kings opposite a partner who wished to penalize the opponents and had no ♥ fit, I would certainly pass (2♠ doubled nets 800 for E-W). Anyway, who am I to disagree with West? He elected to pull the double into 3♣, up to him. And what can we say about East's 3NT? The other two suits stopped so obvious? I'm not so sure (partner has no ♠'s since he bid on over the double), but I'll let it ride. West's 4♣ at (6) was natural, saying that he did not like 3NT. For once, I agree with West's bid here. And how about East's final 4NT? Since partner did not like 3NT then this is a very poor bid – I would most certainly bid 5♣.

And what happened? 4NT got what it deserved – minus two, a 2nd bottom – it was only outshone by the pair in 6♥. I don't know the bidding at other tables, but 6♥ went minus 4 for the undisputed bottom (so the West hand is not a 2♣ opener!). 5♣ at another table made exactly and that score (+600) was only topped by 2♠ doubled that went for 800. Our dynamic duo had *two* chances for an excellent score (2♠* or 5♣) – but blew it!

The bottom lines? Be wary of opening 2♣ on strong two-suiters. 2♣ openings are one trick short of game in their own hand with a major suit (or a balanced 22+). Respect partner's preference for a penalty if you have top cards. Do not bid NT with a mis-fit. If partner pulls 3NT, do not bid 4NT!!

1NT opening out of range

Board 16 from Monday 12th, E-W vul.

South (E) After the Monday session Chuck and Hans got together to tell me some of the many things that I am doing wrong in the running of the club. Chuck was upset that an opponent had opened 1NT on this hand. I asked what more I can do – I repeatedly write up about opening 1NT out of range or with singletons. Chuck said that a procedural penalty (adjusted score) was in order. Hans was silent! Why? Back in news-sheet 56 I gave a pair a zero score when one opened 1NT with a 22(!) count. Hans said that I cannot adjust the score – it was his partner! If Hans cannot keep his protégé in check with *way-out-of-line* bids, how does he expect me to control the whole club?

Stayman, transfers etc after a 2NT opening?

Board 5 from Friday 16th, N-S vul.

North	South (G)	North	South
♠ AK6	♠ Q1043	2♦	2♥
♥ AKQ4	♥ J1072	2NT	3NT
♦ K6	♦ A4	pass	
♣ K983	♣ 1052		

What do you think of this bidding? The 2♦ was strong (I think), 2♥ was a relay and apparently 2NT then showed a balanced hand of about 22 points? OK I guess, but what about South's 3NT bid?

It makes no difference if your 2NT bid is bid directly or via 2♣ or via 2♦, most people play Stayman and Transfers (or Baron/Flint or Puppet Stayman or Niemeijer or some other method of finding major suit fits). At the end of the hand I suggested to South that Stayman and Transfers were applicable here – standard practice (especially with *two* 4 card majors)? He said not so. I don't believe him. Sometimes I wonder why Sam Stayman even bothered.

And what happened? The board had been played just once before - 4♥ made exactly. *'There – you see, the 4-4 fit does not play better'* gloated South. Nonsense. As it happens North also had precisely 2♦'s, ♥'s were 4-1 and 10 tricks were made. Give North 3 or 4♦'s and it's a different story with a ♥ contract easily making more tricks, as it is if ♥'s are 3-2. Even with this *very* fortunate distribution of the cards, 4♥ *still* plays better and made 11 tricks on two subsequent replays of the board. 3NT+1 only scraped an average score because one pair went one down in 6♥. It went against the grain, but Hans had to agree with me! I note that 3 of the 6 tables played it in the inferior 3NT – listening to the wrong people? The bottom line? Look for the 4-4 major suit fit. Think I've said that before.....

Now I fully appreciate that Chuck and Hans want to get back at me, and ganging up would seem to be a good idea? But they really should co-ordinate their efforts better than this! Keep it coming guys, I can take it and it keeps the news-sheets entertaining - but can you make it a bit more challenging for me?

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: 4♥. You can bid a forcing 3♦ first if you really want to, but you must subsequently support partner. Partner's 2♥ bid promises 5♥'s.
- Hand B: 1♥. Partner has asked you to bid a suit. You have a 4 card major – so bid it. Without a 4 card major 1NT would be correct. Do not pass with this type of hand – you will get a poor score even if you manage to defeat 1♦.
- Hand C: Pass or 1♠. A bit strong for a weak 2♠ opening, but 2♠ would be wrong in any case – do not pre-empt when you have an outside 4 card major. I would open 1♠ (and rebid 2♥).
- Hand D: I prefer 1♥ to 2♣, but that is probably a personal preference. It is often better not to open 2♣ with two-suited hands.
- Hand E: 1♣. Do not open an out-of-range 1NT if Chuck is at the table, it simply gets him going and complaining to me.
- Hand F: Pass. A mis-fit. 3♦ would be forcing.
- Hand G: 3♣. Stayman (or whatever, in search of the golden 4-4 major suit fit)
- Hand H: Double. An easy one to finish with. This is a classic take-out double.

Last week's winners: Monday 19/1/04

Friday 23/1/04

1st Chuck/Hans 69 %
 2nd Paul (Ire)/Joe 62 %

1st Paul (Ire)/Joe 64%
 2nd Lis/Finn 62%

A Happy New Year to All.

Year of the monkey. Well we all know that, at least until November. But will there be another 4 years? Let's hope people come to their senses, but no names!

To celebrate the new year I have decided to add a new regular feature to our news-sheet. Since we have a very large number of beginners and 'rusty' players – how about a regular beginner's page?

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

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A you play negative doubles. You open 1 ♠ and LHO overcalls 2 ♦. Partner passes, round to you, what now?
♠ AKJ1082	♠ A7	
♥ Q84	♥ 2	With Hand B you open 1 ♦ and partner responds 1 ♠, what is your rebid?
♦ Q106	♦ AKJ643	
♣ 6	♣ KQ94	
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C RHO opens 1 ♠, what do you do?
♠ 654	♠ AK	
♥ K2	♥ QJ92	What would you open with Hand D? Suppose that you choose 1 ♦ then what is your rebid over partner's 1 ♠?
♦ AJ74	♦ 6543	
♣ K854	♣ KQ2	
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E RHO opens 1 ♦, what do you do?
♠ AQ102	♠ AQ102	
♥ KJ9	♥ K1094	With Hand F RHO opens 1 ♦, what do you do?
♦ Q6542	♦ AQ54	
♣ Q	♣ Q	
Hand G	Hand H	With Hand G partner opens 1 ♠ and RHO overcalls 2 ♦. What do you do?
♠ 73	♠ K954	
♥ AJ3	♥ A873	
♦ K9532	♦ 109	With Hand H LHO opens 1 ♦ and this is passed round to you. What do you do?
♣ A103	♣ J76	

The Beginner's Page

One of my critics has repeatedly said that the news sheets are too advanced. Perhaps so, and so I propose to have a new regular page for beginners/improvers. Now a couple of people have asked me to recommend a good Standard American book for beginners. Unfortunately I don't know of one! I have a couple of good books, but they are Acol and the best American book I know (Standard Bridge Bidding for the 21st century – Max Hardy) is a bit too advanced. If anybody has a good beginner's book, then lend it to me please.

Anyway, I'll bring out a page each week and who knows, by the end of the year I may have enough material for a small beginner's book? Let me know what you think, and if there is a topic that you would like me to cover.

Standard American

I'll start this week by explaining what Standard American is. There are a number of different bidding systems around but the most popular worldwide is Standard American. The basis of this system is that a 1NT opening is balanced in the 15-17 point range and a one level major suit opening must be a five (or longer) card suit. That means that when you do not have a 5-card major and cannot open 1NT (incorrect point range) then you sometimes have to open a minor suit with less than four cards.

Let's consider these six hands. You are dealer and you must decide what your opening bid should be.

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4	Hand 5	Hand 6
♠ 98764	♠ K876	♠ K876	♠ K876	♠ J10964	♠ 64
♥ KJ8	♥ KJ8	♥ KJ8	♥ KJ8	♥ KJ1064	♥ 8
♦ A6	♦ A6	♦ A96	♦ AJ9	♦ A6	♦ AQ942
♣ KQ5	♣ Q876	♣ Q87	♣ KJ7	♣ A	♣ AK764

Hand 1: 1♠. With 13 points it is a clear opener. A 1NT opening is not possible because that would promise 15-17 points. You have a 5 card major so open it! It would be nice to have a few points in the major suit, but this is what you were dealt. Any opening bid other than 1♠ would be a distortion of the hand.

Hand 2: 1♣. A fairly flat 13 points but too weak for 1NT. You cannot open 1♠ as that promises a 5 card suit, so bid your best minor.

Hand 3: 1♣. Now this is perhaps personal preference and many people would open 1♦ as it is a better suit. My advice is to always open 1♣ when equal length (3-3 or 4-4) in the minors. I will explain why in later episodes.

Hand 4: 1NT. Similar to Hand 3 but this time you have enough points to open 1NT (15-17). Always open 1NT with a suitable hand.

Hand 5: 1♠. You have two 5-card majors, so which should you open? It is not a matter of choosing the better one, you always open 1♠ with 5♠'s and 5♥'s. Partner will usually respond and you then bid your ♥'s next go. I will come onto responder's bids and opener's rebids in future exciting episodes.

Hand 6: 1♦. I said that when equal length (3-3 or 4-4) in the minors then open 1♣, but when 5-5 you always open the higher ranking suit – you can rebid the lower ranking next go without raising the level of the bidding too much.

If you don't open 1NT... then rebid 1NT?

Board 4 from Friday 23rd, both vul.

West	East (D)	West	North	East	South
♠ Q943	♠ AK	pass	pass	1♦ (1)	pass
♥ 643	♥ QJ92	1♠	pass	2♥ (2)	pass
♦ AJ8	♦ 6543	pass (3)	pass		
♣ 853	♣ KQ2				

2♥ got a poor score. So what can we say about the bidding? ..

A lot! (two pages). East decided to downgrade the East hand (they play a strong NT) and I certainly would not disagree. AK doubleton is poor and the two four card suits have just 3 points between them – so it's not worth a strong NT, points belong in long suits. Fine, but then what's the correct rebid at (2)? 1NT of course (12-14). 2♥ here is a reverse and shows a strong hand (16+) with a 5+ card ♦ suit. Luckily(?) West passed at (3) but it's no good, the best contract of 1NT has been bypassed. I believe that East probably bid 2♥ because he had read (perhaps repeatedly in the news-sheets) never to deny a 4-card major. Bidding 1NT here is not denying 4 ♥'s, it is the cheaper bid, partner has (generally speaking) denied 4 ♥'s when he bids ♠'s – there is no ♥ fit.

The bottom line? Balanced hands should normally open 1NT - or rebid 1NT (without support for responder) if it does not *deny* (i.e. go past) a 4-card major.

Never deny a Four Card Major

Now I said that you should normally rebid 1NT, but not if it *denies* a 4-card major. Let's shuffle the above hands around slightly: -

West (J)	East (K)	West	North	East	South
♠ 643	♠ QJ92	pass	pass	1♦ (1)	pass
♥ Q943	♥ AK	1♥	pass	1♠ (2)	pass
♦ AJ8	♦ 6543	1NT (3)	pass	pass	pass
♣ 853	♣ KQ2				

Both hands are the same except that I have swapped their major suit holdings. Again East devalues and opens 1♦ at (1). This time West responds 1♥ but it would be wrong of East to rebid 1NT at (2) – that *would* be denying a 4 card major and West could have 4 ♠'s. In this example West does not and so simply rebids 1NT at (3). Fine.

Support with Support

West	East (L)	West	North	East	South
♠ Q943	♠ AK6	pass	pass	1♣ (1)	pass
♥ 643	♥ 92	1♠	pass	2♠ (2)	pass
♦ AJ8	♦ Q543	pass	pass		
♣ 853	♣ KQ92				

This time we have a different East hand and he opens 1♣ at (1) with the intention of re-bidding 1NT over partner's 1♦ or 1♥. When partner responds 1♠, however, it is better to support with 2♠ at (2). There are two reasons why you should support with just 3 cards in this situation: - (a) partner may have a 5 card ♠ suit, and (b) partner probably has 3 or less ♥'s and this suit may be vulnerable in NT.

Hand Evaluation

Back to the original board but let's improve West's hand slightly.

West (M)	East (D)	Sequence A		Sequence B		Sequence C	
		West	East	West	East	West	East
♠ Q943	♠ AK						
♥ 643	♥ QJ92	pass	1NT	pass	1NT	pass	1♦
♦ AK8	♦ 6543	2♣	2♥	2♣	2♥	1♠	1NT
♣ 853	♣ KQ2	3NT	pass	2NT	pass	pass	

As I said, the East hand should de-value because of the poor 4-card suits and doubleton AK, a 1♦ opening is excellent. I have improved the West hand to 9 points, but I keep harping on about devaluing 4333 shape hands. This deal is a perfect example of what happens if people ignore my advice: -

If neither player heeds what I say then you get sequence A. If just West correctly devalues his hand (to 8 pts - deduct a point for 4333) then he has an invitational hand and you get sequence B. If East devalues his hand correctly then sequence C leads to the best contract. 3NT is a very poor contract and I would much prefer to be in 1NT rather than 2NT or 3NT (but then I don't play the cards that well).

I included this rather detailed analysis because one of my critics thought that I should keep it simple and tell people to always open 1NT with balanced 15-17 counts. I like to think that readers are capable of distinguishing between 'good' 15 counts and 'bad' 15 counts (as, indeed, this East player did). Opening 1♦ on this East hand D is an excellent bid (as I have demonstrated) and I know that the player concerned would have opened 1NT if it were not for my writings. I shall continue to preach the gospel. If you would like to read up similar hands that should be re-evaluated (either up or down) then there is a detailed analysis in the booklet I produced on hand evaluation. It is reproduced on our website.

How do you play the ♣ suit?

Board 13 from Friday 23rd, both vul.

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ 5	♠ Q2	-	1♥	1♠	3♥ (1)
♥ KQJ984	♥ A1053	pass (2)	4♥	pass	pass
♦ AQ2	♦ 874	pass (3)			
♣ A105	♣ K962				

First of all, the bidding. At this table N-S were lucky and reached the good 4♥ contract with minimal opposition bidding. At other tables they were not so lucky. South's 3♥ at (1) is fine, in competitive situations it's usually best to bid as high as The Law allows. E-W both had 5 ♠'s. West had just a 6 count and decided not to bid at (2) or (3) holding ♠K10876. He should go to 4♠ – The Law. Points Smoints. In fact E-W bid 4♠ at all of the other 5 tables on Friday – good show. 4♠ went down once (– 100) but N-S bid on to 5♥ at the other 4 tables.

That's why E-W have to compete to 4♠ – push 'em up. Anyway, suppose you are in just 4♥, what are the chances? East overcalled and so probably has ♦K (he did), so 1 ♠ loser and 2 ♦ losers, how do you tackle the ♣'s for no losers?

The answer is that you don't (tackle them) – you make the opponents lead them!

So, a ♠ lead and continuation. You ruff, pull trumps in three rounds and try the ♦ finesse. It loses and a ♦ come back which you win with the ♦A leaving this position: -

North	South	You are in the North hand. What now?
♠ -	♠ -	You should exit with ♦2. It does not matter who wins, if the
♥ J9	♥ 10	♣ honours are split you are home. If a ♣ is returned then you
♦ 2	♦ 8	play low and the 3 rd player must insert an honour and you
♣ A105	♣ K962	can then finesse his partner for the other one. If they return
		a ♦ or ♠ then you ruff in the South hand and discard the ♣5.

This is called a throw-in. In this particular case you are not guaranteed 100% success because if the opponent who wins the 3rd round of ♦'s has no ♣ honour then he can safely exit with a ♣ and his partner wins one of his honours. So the end-play is not 100% but it has a very good chance of success and worked on this occasion.

Incidentally, The Law was one trick out here. N-S can make 10 tricks in ♥'s and E-W can make just 9 tricks in ♠'s, so a total of 19 tricks with 20 trumps. The Law is an excellent guide, but is not always 100% accurate. Quite often it is the reverse, with more tricks than trumps – this is usually when there is a double fit or a long side suit.

Re-open with a double?

Board 6 from Monday 19th, E-W vul.

Dealer:	♠ 73	West	North	East	South
East	♥ AJ3	(C)	(A)		(G)
Both vul	♦ K9532				
	♣ A103	-	-	pass	1♠
		2♦ (1)	pass (2)	pass	dbl (3)
♠ 654	N	pass	pass	oh dear!	
♥ K2	W E				
♦ AJ74	S				
♣ K854					
	♠ AKJ1082				
	♥ Q84				
	♦ Q106				
	♣ 6				

2♦ doubled was a disaster for E-W (-1400), so let's look at the bidding. Obviously the 2♦ overcall, vulnerable, with a 4 card suit was totally absurd. As it happens, 2♣ would have been OK

but overcalls are 5-card suits! Especially at the two level. A double by West would be just as bad a bid – a double of 1♠ normally promises 4♥'s and ♠ shortage. Pass is the only sensible bid at (1).

N-S were playing negative doubles and so North cannot double for penalties at (2). When you play negative doubles you have to pass when you would wish to penalise the opponents and partner (at least most partners) will usually re-open with a double.

I was kibitzing this hand, and after the dust had settled I did not comment upon the overcall but mentioned to E-W that they were perhaps unlucky in that they were up against probably the only pair in the club who know how to bid negative double sequences correctly. South's redouble at (3) is, in my opinion, 'automatic' playing negative doubles.

Now there are differing views on what constitutes a penalty double (or penalty pass) and also when you should re-open with a double when playing negative doubles. I think that both N-S players got this spot on here. The North ♦ holding is fine for a penalty pass and I would not even consider bidding NT, regardless of vulnerability. A mis-fit for partner – go for blood. If people make absurd overcalls then the only way that they will learn is if they concede huge penalties? Double! That'll learn 'em.

♠ AK8 Let's look back at a hand that we've seen a few times before. It's from
♥ 109 news-sheet 18. It opened 1♦, LHO overcalled 1♥ and partner passed.
♦ KJ10943 Round to you, you play negative doubles. I said that a double was automatic
♣ A5 here with this hand. One distinguished resident (Hans) said not so. Why?
He claims that partner cannot have a penalty pass because this hand contains
the ♥109. He thinks that it is inconceivable that LHO can overcall and partner have a penalty pass
missing these two (109) cards! Looks like South in the above example disagrees with him (Q106). We
live in the real world and there will always be players who will overcall on rubbish. They will only learn if
you teach 'em a lesson. I will always trust partner rather than an opponent and the double costs nothing
as you are also happy if partner has nothing and pulls it (both with this hand and the South hand above).

A re-opening double promises no more than a sound opening bid when you play negative doubles.

Who should bid?

Board 10 from Monday 19th, both vul.

North (E)	South (H)	West	North	East	South
♠ AQ102	♠ K954	-	-	pass	pass
♥ KJ9	♥ A873	1♦	pass (1)	pass	pass (2)
♦ Q6542	♦ 109				
♣ Q	♣ J76				

At the end of the Monday session one pair asked me what went wrong here. 1♦ made exactly and all the other N-S pairs got + scores (generally in ♠ contracts). Who should bid?

Let's start with North at (1). If West had opened 1♣ then a take-out double would be fine; it would be nice to have 4♥'s but these 3 are good enough. However, you cannot double 1♦ as you will be completely fixed if partner responds 2♣. The hand has 14 points and is not quite good enough for a 1NT overcall. With a couple more points I would overcall 1NT – a singleton is OK for a 1NT overcall (sometimes you are fixed) but not for a 1NT opening. Anyway, this hand is not good enough. So 1♠? Now some experts do advocate overcalling on a good 4 card suit like this, but only (as in this case) if your suit is good and you have length in the suit opened. No, partner will expect a 5 card suit for an overcall and will support with 3 cards (or even two!). I feel that 4 card overcalls are best left to the experts – they are experts because they can play Moysian fits and even 4-2 fits well.

We've run out of options. The only bid that North can make at (1) is pass!

So then, should South step into the breach at (2)?

Yes! This is called balancing (USA) or protection (UK) – bidding in the pass-out seat. LHO has opened with a simple 1 level bid and RHO has passed (so he has 5 or less points). You have just 8 points – so where are all the missing points?

With partner! The answer is that partner has values but probably had no 5-card suit to bid. You now have to make a noise. A bid in the pass-out seat does not promise much – you are bidding partner's points. With a 5 card suit, bid it. 1NT in this position shows about 8-11 points. With no ♦ stop and two 4-card majors double is best with this South hand.

And just one final point. Suppose that South had indeed doubled, then what should North bid? Normally when partner doubles and you have 14 points then you insist upon game. But not when partner's double was a protective (balancing) bid – partner is not promising any more than about 7 or 8 points. 3♠ would be correct with this North hand. One way of thinking about it is to think that partner has 'borrowed an ace' from your hand – so make the bid that you would make opposite a non-protective bid from partner if you had 4 points less.

Hand F

♠ AQ102
♥ KJ94
♦ AJ94
♣ Q

Just to underline one point I made above, what would you bid with this hand if RHO opened 1♦. This really is too strong to pass. I would overcall 1NT! (15-18 pts). Perhaps not everybody's choice. If you double and partner bids ♥'s or ♠'s then everything is rosey, but if partner bids 2♣ then you are fixed. 2NT over partner's 2♣ would show a stronger hand (19-21 pts) and 2♥/♠ would show a better hand and suit. If you were dealer then you would open this hand 1♦, but after RHO has opened 1♦ you are a bit fixed – that's why a singleton is acceptable in a 1NT *overcall*.

Finding a fit?

Board 9 from Monday 19th, E-W vul.

North (B)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ A7	♠ 98432	-	1♦	1♥	1♠
♥ 2	♥ 7	pass	3♦ (1)	pass	4♦ (2)
♦ AKJ643	♦ Q85	pass	4NT	pass	5♦
♣ KQ94	♣ AJ76	pass	pass	pass	

I have frequently said that 5 of a minor is usually not a good contract if 3NT is a viable option. Here, of course, 3NT is not an option and so N-S should look for a fit. This was the bidding at one table but I don't like it too much. North has a good hand and when opponents bid the shortage and partner bids ♠'s it improves. I think it's worth a force; 3♦ at (1) is not forcing and I prefer 3♣. Anyway, South supported ♦'s and a sensible final contract was reached (5♣ would be equally good – better on a non ♥ lead).

Two pairs ended up in a poor 4♠. I would not re-bid this miserable ♠ suit, but support whichever minor partner chose to bid at (1).

Bidding Quiz Answers

Hand A: If you play negative doubles then you have to double with most hands in this situation – partner may have a penalty pass. There are a (very) few hand types where it is incorrect to re-open with a double, but this is not one of them.

Hand B: 3♣. I would want to force (to game) after partner did not bid ♥'s. 3♦ is not forcing and I prefer to show my good 2nd suit.

Hand C: Pass. Of course.

Hand D: 15 points, so 1NT? That's OK but I think that downgrading because of the poor 4 card suits and AK doubleton is in order. So opening 1♦ is fine, but the rebid over partner's 1♠ is then 1NT (12-14). Do not bid 2♥, partner's 1♠ bid has denied 4♥'s (unless he is so strong that he can bid again). A 2♥ bid here is a reverse which most players play as forcing.

Hand E: Pass. Wrong shape for a double.

Hand F: Tricky, but I feel it's too good to pass. The only sensible bid that I can see is 1NT showing (15-18) and (semi) balanced and ♦ stop(s).

Hand G: Double for penalties. If you play negative doubles then you must pass, partner is then expected to re-open with a double which you pass for penalties. If you do play negative doubles but partner did not re-open with a double with Hand A then play penalty doubles with him or find a new partner.

Hand H: Double. Partner may have as many as 14 or so points but no bid he could make (no 5 card suit and wrong shape for a double). You know that partner has points and you must balance with a hand like this.



Last week's winners: Monday 26/1/04

Friday 30/1/04

N-S 1st Norman/Dave 58 % E-W 1st Lars/Lars 60 % 1st Paul(Ire)/Joe 61%
 N-S 2nd Don(US)/Gary 57 % E-W 2nd Paul(Ire)/Hans 58 % 2nd Norman/Dave 60%

So the almighty current regime in the USA wants to preach democracy to the rest of the world. Will all the residents of Florida get a vote this time? And can they even count them? So Russia has a biased media – I tuned into Fox News a few weeks back, I have never seen such a load of biased right wing propaganda in my life! Talk about black kettles and pots or whatever. It also looks like Tony has got the British media (BBC) crawling under his thumb as well, eh?

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

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A partner opens 1NT (15-17). Do you invite slam (perhaps with a quantitative 4NT) or simply bid 6NT? Or what? Bid Stayman first?
♠ Q8	♠ KQ1084	
♥ J7	♥ 5	
♦ KQJ42	♦ KQ654	With hand B partner opens 1♥ and you respond 1♠. Partner then rebids 1NT (12-14), what is your bid?
♣ AQ42	♣ Q3	
Hand C	Hand D	With hand C partner opens a strong NT, what is your bid?
♠ J986	♠ Q432	
♥ J965	♥ AK82	Just for a change an Acol question. You play Acol (4 card majors and a weak NT), what do you open with hand D?
♦ Q642	♦ A9	
♣ Q	♣ A85	
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E you open 1♣ and partner responds 1♥. What is your rebid?
♠ AK7	♠ 1064	
♥ AJ3	♥ A853	With Hand F partner opens 1♠ and you respond 2♣. Partner then rebids 2♠, what is your bid?
♦ 9	♦ 4	
♣ AJ9874	♣ AKQ104	
Hand G	Hand H	With hand G RHO opens ♦, what is your bid?
♠ KQ98	♠ AJ92	
♥ Q5	♥ AK103	With Hand H you open 1NT and partner bids 2♣, Stayman. What is your response?
♦ J653	♦ A93	
♣ K104	♣ 109	
Hand J	Hand K	With hand J partner opens 1♦, what is your response?
♠ 853	♠ 10	
♥ AK2	♥ A3	With Hand K you open 1♦ and partner responds 1♠. What is your rebid?
♦ KJ1065	♦ AKQ10953	
♣ J10	♣ Q72	

The Beginner's Page

Last week I covered the opening bids of 1 of a suit and 1NT. This week we'll look at responding to opener's 1 level opening bid.

First of all let's lay down the points requirements. Generally speaking you need 6 or more points to respond to partner's opening. A new suit is always forcing and opener must rebid something. So a new suit is 6-27 points (unlimited).

Limit Bids

But there are two ways in which you can tell partner how many points you have (these are called limit bids – because you show how many points you hold within a limited range). When partner opens with one of a suit there are two types of limit bids and they are not forcing. Partner may pass if there are insufficient points to look for game - generally around 25 in total.

These two limited responses are supporting partner and bidding NT.

Suppose that partner opens 1♥, then the ranges of the limit bids are: -

1NT = 6-10 pts	2♥ = 6-10 pts
2NT = 11-12 pts	3♥ = 11-12 pts *
3NT = 13-15 pts	4♥ = 13-15 pts *

Since we play 5 card major suit openings, you may raise partner with just 3 cards.

* Note, there are better, more sophisticated, ways of showing a raise of partner's suit to the 3 and 4 level, but I'm keeping it simple here.

Let's have a few examples, partner has opened 1♥, what do you respond?

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4	Hand 5	Hand 6
♠ 764	♠ 764	♠ K76	♠ Q76	♠ Q76	♠ Q76
♥ K98	♥ KJ8	♥ KJ98	♥ J8	♥ J8	♥ J8
♦ 986	♦ K86	♦ A987	♦ AJ97	♦ AJ97	♦ AQ97
♣ J752	♣ 8762	♣ 87	♣ 8754	♣ A874	♣ AQ74

Hand 1: Pass. You generally need 6 points to respond.

Hand 2: 2♥. Sufficient points and support for a raise.

Hand 3: 3♥. Good support and 11 points, invite 4♥ by raising to 3♥.

Hand 4: 1NT. Jx is not good enough support to raise partner and 1NT is best

Hand 5: 2NT. 11-12 points and poor support for partner's suit.

Hand 6: 3NT. 13-15 points and poor support for partner's suit.

Next week I'll cover responder bidding a new suit.

Mentioning Names etc.

One member (Chuck of course) asked if I could refrain from mentioning his name in the news-sheets. I have stated my policy before and am not changing it. For the record: -

- (a) If I notice a nice bidding sequence or play then I can obviously mention those concerned.
- (b) If I notice a particularly bad bid etc then I generally refrain from mentioning names.
- (c) If one partner of a partnership criticises his partner and I feel that the criticism is unjustified then I usually say nothing. I may write it up if it's worthwhile but I will not mention names. It's generally up to people to choose their partner and up to them if they believe what they say.
- (d) If a player criticises an opponent incorrectly then I feel obliged to say/write something. I see nothing wrong with names in this scenario – don't give erroneous unsolicited advice.
- (e) If somebody criticises me or challenges me to write up a particular hand then the gloves are off. Expect to be named, be *sure* that you know what you are talking about!
- (f) If there is a general discussion about a hand with various people expressing their views, then I see nothing wrong with stating who thinks what if I report the debate.

I have received an *enormous* amount off support recently (thanks everyone) for the way I run the club and the news sheets. At least most people appreciate how much effort I put in. I am not changing things because of the minority opinions of just one or two players (it is just two – Hans and Chuck). As I said two weeks ago, if you can do better, do so.

Support with just 3 cards?

Board 4 from Monday 26th, both vul.

North	South (E)	North	South
♠ J64	♠ AK7	pass	1♣
♥ Q9864	♥ AJ3	1♥	2♣ (1)
♦ A83	♦ 9	pass	
♣ 53	♣ AJ9874		

2♣ was not a success, with 4♥ making at other tables, so what went wrong? The South hand is too strong for just 2♣. 3♣ is a possibility but I would prefer to support ♥'s. Now a 3♥ bid at (1) would normally promise 4 card support (North's 1♥ bid only promises 4 ♥'s), but this is a nice hand with excellent top cards and a singleton. A possible 4-3 ♥ fit should play very well as North is unlikely to be forced (you have the aces) and you can ruff ♦'s in the short trump hand. I would bid 3♥ at (1), doubtless not everybody will agree with me?

Recommended bidding: -	pass - 1♣ - 1♥ - 3♥ - 4♥.	Sequence A
or	pass - 1♣ - 1♥ - 3♣ - 3♥ - 4♥.	Sequence B
	↑	

And remember that debate about 3♥ being weak or forcing in a similar sequence to Sequence B - news-sheet 51 (Gotcha)? This North hand is a perfect example of why it should be forcing. If South rebids 3♣, what other sensible bid does North have?

Another a fine mess you've gotten us into, Stanley

Board 3 from Monday 26th, E-W vul.

		<u>Table A</u>		<u>Table B</u>	
West (H)	East (A)	West	East	West	East
♠ AJ92	♠ Q8	1NT	2♣	1NT	2♣
♥ AK103	♥ J7	2♥	3♦	2♠	3NT (1)
♦ A93	♦ KQJ42	3♠	3NT	4♥ ...	
♣ 109	♣ AQ42	pass	 etc to 6NT	

East knows that it's combined 30-32 points and he has a good ♦ suit, so 6NT (via some convoluted sequence if you wish)? That's what no less than 6 of the 9 E-W pairs did on Monday, with only Lars/Lars and Tom/David managing to stop in a sensible 3NT. 6NT failed by one or two tricks on every occasion. So how should East bid? It's difficult if you don't have a form of minor suit Stayman. First, let's look at Tables A and B: -

Table A. 2♣ was Stayman. Now generally speaking 2♣ Stayman guarantees a 4 card major. This bidding shown was not very scientific but was lucky in that East discovered that there was no fit and so did not bid slam.

Table B: 2♣ Stayman again. Now it is generally accepted that you should reply 2♥ to Stayman when holding both majors; the reasons are probably a bit complex and some players do indeed say that it makes no difference. So, 2♠ is acceptable for some players. But East really has got himself into a fine mess now; 3NT at (1) guarantees 4♥'s (otherwise he would not have bid Stayman!). The rest of the auction to 6NT was meaningless.

So, pretty silly really. Only bid Stayman if you have a 4 card major. There is an exception if you play 4-way transfers but it is not applicable here.

How should the hand be bid? The basic thinking (by East) should be – when partner opens a strong NT then you need 18+ points for 6NT and a good 15-17 points to invite. This is a good 15 but only worth an invitation (4NT).

Should West accept? It's in the middle but if my partner had bid an invitational 4NT directly over my 1NT I would not accept as there is no fit (he did not try Stayman).

Another possible bidding sequence if you play minor suit transfers is to transfer into ♦'s and then bid ♣'s, game forcing. West, with no fit, would then bid 4NT which East should pass.

My recommended bidding: - 1NT - 4NT - pass

or (if you play 4-way transfers) 1NT - 2NT - 3♣ - 4♣ - 4NT - pass

or even 1NT - 2NT - 3♣ - 6♦ - pass

In these latter sequences 2NT is a transfer to ♦'s and 3♣ is a super accept. 4♣ is a 2nd suit and you would have to agree that 4NT is a suggestion to play there (no 4-4 or better fit), it should be. A difficult hand, especially for non-familiar or non-expert partnerships.

Just one more point. 6♦ is a fairly reasonable contract on this board (far better than 6NT). It's funny that a large number of players (just about the whole club?) seem to have a mental block when it comes to bidding minor suit slams and prefer hopeless 6NT contracts.

A Tangled Web

Board 17 from Friday 30th, love all.

West (J)	East	West (me)	East
♠ 853	♠ A	-	1♦
♥ AK2	♥ J87	3NT (1)	pass
♦ KJ1065	♦ A8432		
♣ J10	♣ A974		

Not very scientific, but what should West (me) bid at (1)? You have game going values so 2♦ and 3♦ are out (non-forcing). It is extremely dangerous to lie in a major suit which partner has not denied, so 1♥ and 1♠ are out. 2NT is non-forcing so no good. 4♦ and 5♦ are bad because they go past 3NT. You could lie in ♣'s and bid 2♣, but that really is a distortion, isn't it? With this East hand he would raise to 3♣; you are no better off and partner thinks that you have ♣'s. If you then bid 3NT partner may well bid 4♣ and you're in another fine mess.

Oh what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive.

Playing standard methods the hand is virtually unbidable and I think that my choice of 3NT is the best option. 3NT was easily the best contract of course (it made +1). The board was played 5 other times in 3,4,5 and even 6♦ (minus 1)! It seems that nobody heeds my advice about NT scoring more than minor suit contracts??

But seriously, how should the hand be bid? The only real way is to play inverted minors, but the only players that I know for sure who play them are Chuck and Clive (some others may do?), it really is a fine convention. It is rather advanced but I have a few sheets on it if you want to read it up. If you don't play inverted minors then I would bid 3NT every day of the week.

The 3NT rebid

Board 8 from Friday 30th, love all.

West (K)	East	West (me)	East
♠ 10	♠ A542	1♦	1♠
♥ A3	♥ 52	3NT (1)	pass
♦ AKQ10953	♦ 872		
♣ Q72	♣ A1043		

Simple, eh? Just one other pair bid 3NT (good show, Angela/Mike). Other contracts were a miserable 2♦ or 3♦ and an optimistic 5♦. I think that I've said it before, but if 3NT is a viable option, then bid it!

But seriously, what does the 3NT rebid at (1) mean? The best scheme is to play a jump to 2NT as 18-19 (17-19 if you play a weak NT) and to leave the jump to 3NT as a long solid or semi-solid suit – as in this example. It says 'shut up' – politely of course, and partner is expected to pass unless he can envisage slam, it does not ask partner to seek an alternative game contract. Another advantage of this scheme is that after the jump to 2NT partner has more room to investigate a fit or even slam. Of course if responder's first bid was at the two level, then the jump to 3NT encompasses both of these hand types.

The bottom line? This use of the jump to 3NT really is very descriptive and is common practice by experienced players.

Find the 4-4 fitBoard 23 from Monday 26th, both vul.

North (C)	South (D)	<u>Table A</u>		<u>Table B</u>	
		North	South	North	South
♠ J986	♠ Q432		1NT	-	1♠ (2)
♥ J965	♥ AK82	-		-	
♦ Q642	♦ A9	2♣ (1)	2♥	2♦ (3)	3NT (4)
♣ Q	♣ A85	pass		pass	

There were a mixed bag of final results on this board from Monday. 2♥ is the best contract; two pairs stopped in 1NT – I would always bid (garbage) Stayman with that North hand at (1). Just 3 pairs found the good sequence as Table A.

At Table B they were playing a weak NT and South elected to open 1♠. Now this is old-style Acol. Jeremy Flint (and others) have presented the philosophy of bidding 4 card suits up the line (when playing 4 card majors) and this is the preferred practice now. The reason is that if you open 1♥ you always have a rebid (support partner if he bids ♠'s or else bid NT). If you open 1♠ and rebid 2♥ then this promises 5 ♠'s these days.

But that was not the only problem at this table. Playing a weak NT you need 8 points to respond with a new suit at the 2 level and this North hand is too weak. Anyway, with 4 card support it should simply have bid 2♠ at (3). And the 3NT bid at (4)? It shows 17-19 points, but the ♥ (and ♠) fit was missed.

The bottom lines: -

- (1) Bid 4 card suits up the line, whether an opening bid (playing 4 card majors) or at a subsequent stage in the auction (both opener and responder).
- (2) Support with support. If partner opens 1♥/♠ then support directly (to the correct level) with 4 card support.
- (3) You can bid garbage Stayman with very weak 4441 and similar hands (short ♣'s).

Nice BiddingBoard 11 from Monday 26th, love all.

West	East (B)	West	East
♠ A9	♠ KQ1084	1♥	1♠
♥ A10984	♥ 5	2♥ (1)	3♦ (2)
♦ A97	♦ KQ654	3♠	4♠
♣ 1074	♣ Q3	pass	

This was the bidding at one table (Lars/Lars). I like it apart from the fact that I prefer 1NT at (1). The rest would be the same, though, and an excellent contract was reached. 3♦ at (2) is best, even if partner had rebid 1NT. With two good 5 card suits, bid them.

So, a fine final contract which made +1 the two times it was bid. Six pairs managed to land in a miserable 3NT where the opponents can take 5 ♣ tricks off the top.

The bottom lines. A good 5-2 fit is playable and is preferable to NT if a suit is wide open. Bid out your shape. I would also bid 3♦ at (2) if I held just 4 ♦'s.

A Word About the Scoring

One member queried the scoring last week; he had a higher total number of matchpoints than another pair that I placed above them. How come the lower total got a higher %? Now it's always possible that I have made a mistake – but really, is that likely? Don't answer that.

The reason is that when there is a sit-out then some pairs usually play more boards than other pairs. Rather than give players an average for the boards that they do not play, they get no score but their final percentage reflects the number of boards that they actually played.

How do you bid slam?

Board 5 from Monday 26th, E-W vul.

West (F)	East	West	East
♠ 1064	♠ AKJ972	-	1♠
♥ A853	♥ 642	2♣	2♠ (1)
♦ 4	♦ A87	4♦ (2)	4NT
♣ AKQ104	♣ 9	5♥	6♠

Slam (6♠+1) was bid at just one table on Monday (well done Lars/Lars) but I don't know their bidding. 13 tricks were usually made in 4♠. I was asked how 6♠ could be bid and this bidding is my concoction.

(1) West's ♣ bid has not improved East's hand and 2♠ here shows 6♠'s.

(2) It's up to West to make the move. The West hand looks very good knowing that there are 6♠'s opposite and a 4♦ splinter (agreeing ♠'s and showing a singleton or void ♦) is the best bid. It's easy then. 4♦ is a splinter here because it's an unnecessary jump as 3♦ would most definitely be forcing (a new suit at the 3 level *and* a reverse).

The bottom line? Splinters really are worth mastering. Think I've said that before?

Overcalls are 5 card suits

Board 12 from Monday 26th, N-S vul.

North (G)	West	North	East	South
♠ KQ98	1♦	1♠ (1)	pass	2♥
♥ Q5	pass	2NT (2)	pass	4♥
♦ J653	pass	pass	pass	
♣ K104				

4♥ went down for a poor score. I went into not overcalling on 4 card suits in some detail last week. South had a good hand here, but North did not! The overcall at (1) is unwarranted, pass is correct. And if I had (heaven forbid) overcalled 1♠ at (1) then I would most certainly pass at (2), thankful that we had found a good spot. 2NT at (2) shows a far better hand (around 15-17 points).

The bottom lines? Overcalls are 5 card suits. If you overcall and partner responds in a new suit then this is not forcing and a NT bid by you shows a good hand (around 15-17, the same as a 1NT overcall but with a poor holding in partner's suit).

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: Invite. The hand is not good enough to blast 6NT. A general guide is that 18 points is enough for 6NT and you should invite with a good 15-17. 6 of a minor would be a good bet if there is a 5-4 or 4-4 minor suit fit, but most casual partnerships do not have a mechanism to discover this. I have a somewhat complicated but excellent paper on locating minor and major suit fits after a 1NT opening if you are interested.
Do *not* bid 2♣ Stayman. This is just silly as a subsequent 3NT or 4NT bid by you guarantees a 4 card major (otherwise you would make the same bid without bidding Stayman).
- Hand B: 3♦, forcing. Bid out your shape. 4♠ may be a better spot than 3NT.
- Hand C: 2♣, (garbage Stayman) and pass any response.
- Hand D: 1♥, the modern trend in Acol is to bid 4 card suits up the line. It really is far superior to opening 1♠ and then rebidding 2♥ (which now promises 5+ ♠'s).
Playing Standard American you obviously open 1NT.
- Hand E: 3♣ or 3♥. The hand is too strong for 2♣ or 2♥ and not quite good enough for a game forcing 3♦ splinter. I prefer 3♥, normally this would promise 4 card support but the aces and singleton are sufficient compensation in my view.
- Hand F: 4♦, a splinter. It sets ♠'s as trumps and shows ♦ shortage (singleton or void). Partner's 2♠ bid promises 6 ♠'s here and slam could be on if he has the right cards (no wasted honours in ♦'s), so tell him about your support and shortage.
- Hand G: Pass. Overcalls are 5 card suits. Wrong shape for a double.
- Hand H: 2♥. It is generally accepted that you should respond 2♥ when holding both majors. If partner then bids 3NT you should convert to 4♠ as his 2♣ bid promised a 4 card major. Having a special bid (such as 2NT) to show both majors in response to Stayman is unsound – partner may have a hand like hand C.
- Hand J: A tricky one. The only real solution is to play inverted minors, but they are a somewhat advanced convention and so we have to find the best bid without them. You have a lovely fit and game going values. 1♥ or 1♠ are lies that are too dangerous (if partner supports). 2♦ and 3♦ are underbids and non-forcing. 2♣ is an option but it really is a distortion here. 4♦ and 5♦ are options that I don't like as they go past 3NT. That leaves just one bid. You all know me - if 3NT is a viable alternative, bid it!
I would (did) respond 3NT.
- Hand K: 3NT. If 3NT is a viable option, bid it! But seriously, 3NT is the correct bid here. A jump rebid of 2NT is best used as a balanced 18-19 points (17-19 if you play Acol). That leaves the double jump to 3NT for a hand with a long running (minor) suit. This is a very powerful hand (8 tricks) and you need very little from partner to make 3NT. 3♦ is not forcing and would be a gross underbid.

Now there were a few tricky hands this week, and a couple that really cannot be properly bid without advanced conventions (Minor suit Stayman, Shape Asking Relays after Stayman, 4 suit transfers, Inverted minors etc.). These are probably a bit advanced for the news-sheet, but tell me if you would like me to explain any of these.



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

Friday 6/2/04

N-S 1 st John/Dave	60 %	E-W 1 st Øystein/Bjarne	59 %	1 st Mike/Angela	62%
N-S 2 nd Norman/Dave	59 %	E-W 2 nd Chris/Niels	58 %	2 nd Lis/Finn	59%

The Dave who won N-S on Monday is a different Dave to the one who came second (obviously). The Dave who came second is the one who used to play with John but now doesn't (obviously). Anyway, the N-S field on Monday was very strong, with pairs such as Paul(Ire)/Joe, Alex/Jeff and Hans/Michael (3rd, 4th and 5th resp.) all close behind. It looks like the Brits and their weak NT Acol system won in the day though (1st and 2nd).

The Chris who came 2nd E-W is also a Brit – not the chess playing Chris from England but a new member (a friend of the 2nd Dave). The Mike who won on Friday is married to Angela (both Brits), he is not the Canadian Batchelor Mike. All very confusing. Do I need surnames? At least names like Øystein and Bjarne are unambiguous (they're not Brits).

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

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A partner opens 1♦ and RHO overcalls 1♠. What is your bid?
♠ Q5	♠ KQ5	
♥ K764	♥ AJ109	With Hand B partner opens 1NT. Do you bid Stayman or 3NT?
♦ J985	♦ Q76	
♣ 1073	♣ 963	
Hand C	Hand D	What do you open with Hand C?
♠ A974	♠ A10632	
♥ J73	♥ Q8	What do you open with Hand D?
♦ 3	♦ Q53	
♣ K9832	♣ QJ9	
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E you open 1♠ and partner responds 1NT, what now?
♠ K10732	♠ 862	
♥ Q3	♥ 983	With Hand F RHO opens 1♥ which is passed round to partner who doubles. RHO passes, what do you bid?
♦ AK54	♦ KQJ3	
♣ K10	♣ 1072	
Hand G	Hand H	With hand G partner opens 1♠ and RHO doubles. What is your bid?
♠ K8	♠ K9743	
♥ AK104	♥ A	With hand H partner opens 1♥ and you bid 1♠. Partner then bids 2♣, what do you do?
♦ 1084	♦ 10975	
♣ K865	♣ QJ2	

The Beginner's Page

This week we consider what responder must do when partner opens and you cannot support his suit. As I said last week, a bid of a new suit is forcing and could be any strength (6+ points). However, if the new suit is at the two level you need considerably more (11+).

The Jump Shift

But what if you have a very strong hand and a good suit? You can show this by jumping. This is game forcing and always promises a very good suit (5+ cards). If a major suit, then it strongly suggests that that suit be trumps. If a minor suit, then it is often angling for 3NT (or a slam).

Let's have a few examples, partner has opened 1♥, what do you respond?

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4	Hand 5	Hand 6
♠ A864	♠ A8764	♠ AKJ962	♠ 864	♠ 762	♠ A7
♥ K8	♥ K8	♥ K8	♥ K8	♥ K84	♥ J8
♦ 986	♦ K86	♦ AJ7	♦ AJ864	♦ AQ86	♦ AKQ987
♣ J752	♣ KJ2	♣ 87	♣ J75	♣ Q84	♣ Q74

Hand 1: 1♠. You have the correct point count for 1NT, but do not deny a 4 card major. If partner also has 4 ♠'s then a ♠ contract will play better. If partner does not have 4 ♠'s then he will bid 1NT with a balanced hand (12-14) and that is fine.

Hand 2: 1♠. You have sufficient points to insist upon game but do not jump to 2♠ with a suit that is this poor.

Hand 3: 2♠. This suit is good enough for a jump shift response.

Hand 4: 1NT. The hand is not strong enough for a 2 level response.

Hand 5: 2♦. Enough for a 2 level response.

Hand 6: 3♦. Game forcing. Tell partner about your excellent suit.

Note. What I have said about jump shifts is basic Standard American. Some more advanced players may choose the jump shift to mean something different – they prefer to take it slowly with strong hands.

The 2♥ bid when partner opens 1♠

Hand 7	Hand 8	
♠ 86	♠ 86	We see from the above (Hand 5) that a new suit only promises 4 cards. There is, however, one exception. When partner opens 1♠ then a response of 2♥ by us takes up a lot of bidding space. For that reason one needs a 5 card suit (in addition to the mandatory 11+ pts) to respond 2♥. With Hands 7 & 8 partner has opened 1♠. With Hand 7 we respond 2♥ but with hand 8 we bid 2♣. A ♥ fit is never lost, as if opener has a 4 card ♥ suit in addition to his 5 card ♠ opener, then he will rebid 2♥.
♥ KQJ86	♥ KQJ8	
♦ Q62	♦ Q62	
♣ KJ5	♣ KJ52	

Stayman or not?

Board 27 from Monday 2nd, love all.

North (B)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ KQ5	♠ A1032	-	-	-	1NT
♥ AJ109	♥ K872	pass	3NT	pass	pass
♦ Q76	♦ AJ10	pass			
♣ 963	♣ K5				

Looking at both hands it is clear that 4♥ is normally a far better contract. Never deny a 4 card major, especially when you have a very weak suit. I've been all through this before (news-sheet 28), the only time that you should not bid Stayman opposite a strong NT opener is when you have 13+ points (so 28+ in total) and all other suits well covered (i.e. weak 'trumps').

How many points for a Stayman?

I gave an example last week of a very weak hand that should bid Stayman. One pair asked me about this as they had always thought that you need invitational values or more to bid Stayman. In principle, that is correct, and there are just two exceptions where you can bid Stayman with a very weak hand: -

Hand J	Hand K	Hand L	
♠ K9864	♠ K984	♠ K984	With Hand J you can bid 2♣. You pass a 2♥/♥ response and convert 2♦ to 2♠. It's the same when you have 5♥'s and 4♠'s (convert 2♦ to 2♥).
♥ J762	♥ J762	♥ J762	With Hand K you can bid 2♣ and pass any response.
♦ 76	♦ 87642	♦ -	But with Hand L you will be fixed over a 2♦ reply and so it is best to pass 1NT. You do not want to play in a possible 4-2 fit.
♣ Q5	♣ -	♣ 87643	

How many points for a negative double?

Board 4 from Friday 6th, both vul.

West (A)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ Q5	♠ AJ76	pass	pass	1♦	1♠
♥ K764	♥ 83	dbl (1)	2♠	dbl (2)	pass
♦ J985	♦ Q1042	pass	pass		
♣ 1073	♣ AJ2				

2♠ made +1 for a complete bottom to E-W, anyone to blame? East later confirmed that his double at (2) was for penalties (regular partnerships may wish to discuss this) but said that West should have more for his negative double. I disagree. If there was no intervention then West would respond 1♥. After the intervention that is not possible but a negative double here promises no more than a 1♥ bid would – values to compete to 2♥ if there is a fit. With no fit then West bids 2♦ over any response. To bid 2♦ at (1) is incorrect as it denies 4♥'s. It is safe to negative double in this situation with minimal values as you have a ♦ fit. East's double on a minimal hand is a very poor bid – he should simply pass.

The bottom line. A negative double is unlimited, but at the one level it only promises values to compete to 2 of the major, so could be just 6 points.

When not to play in the 4-4 fit

Board 17 from Monday 2nd, love all.

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ 1094	♠ AKJ7	-	1♣	pass	1♠ (1)
♥ Q6	♥ A94	pass	1NT (2)	pass	3♦ (3)
♦ 8642	♦ AK95	pass	4♦ (4)	pass	4NT
♣ AKQJ	♣ 65	pass	5♦	pass	6♦ (5)
		pass	6♠ (6)	pass	6NT (7)
		pass	pass	pass	

This was the bidding from Joe/Paul on Monday. It may look like a case of passing the buck, but in fact it is all quite logical.

- (1) This hand is strong enough to bid 2♦ and then reverse into ♠'s, but it is the wrong shape (that would promise 5♦'s). So 1♠ is best here.
- (2) 2♠ is an alternative here (support with support) but South only promises 4♠'s and so 1NT is best. If the ♥'s were xx then I would bid 2♠.
- (3) 2♦ would not be forcing in their system, so 3♦ is fine but this generally promises 5♠'s. However, with this very strong hand that's not really a problem.
- (4) What would you bid here? 3NT? Or perhaps 3♥ (4th suit forcing – checking for a stop)? Maybe, but I prefer Joe's choice of 4♦ - support with support.
- (5) With an established fit and an excellent suit, this is the best slam to bid – the 4-4 fit is usually best and safer than 6NT.
- (6) North, however, knows that his ♦ support is not really slam quality. If there is an unavoidable loser outside the ♦ suit then it's probably curtains as there is probably a ♦ loser. North's sequence (1♠ followed by 3♦) usually promises 5♠'s and it looks like the ♠ slam is better.
- (7) South, of course, knows exactly why North pulled 6♦, and he also knows that North has exactly 3♠'s (he did not support at (1)). So he bids 6NT.

6NT is an excellent contract – played from the correct hand (you don't mind a ♥ lead – quite likely on the bidding). Excellent bidding judgment all round. 6NT made and scored a 2nt top. It was only beaten by the pair making 6NT +1. It looks impossible, how did you manage it John? Boards like that help to win competitions, eh?

The bottom line. I am always harping on about the 4-4 fit, and even 8642 is usually fine. You normally get an extra trick in one hand or the other. An exception, however, is when you have bundles of points. With a weak suit like this you normally have a trump loser, if you have ample points it may be best not to have this suit as trumps. 8642 is fine in a part-score or game contract but is too weak to be trumps in a slam.

A Word about Qx.

As I said, I like the 1NT rebid with the West hand. Qx is an interesting holding; if partner has Axx (as in this case) then the suit is immune to the opening lead without conceding two tricks to you. Qx holdings usually belong in declarer's hand, not dummy. John, of course, opened a weak NT with the North hand – nothing to think about.

1960, The Year of My Birth?Board 5 from Monday 2nd, N-S vul.

North (C)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ 105	♠ K86	-	3♦	pass	3NT (1)
♥ -	♥ AQ5	pass	pass	pass	
♦ J98632	♦ AK75				
♣ AK532	♣ Q76				

3NT made a comfortable 13 tricks on a ♥ lead, anything wrong with the bidding? Yes! In my view this is a terrible pre-empt. Pre-empts are 7 card suits and it is best to have points in the pre-empt suit. Also, a huge second suit like this is unwise for a pre-empt – the hand has too much playing strength. And the 3NT bid? Fine in my view. Opposite a normal pre-empt you would not expect to make slam.

And how should the bidding go? North should pass and South opens 1♦. It's easy then if you play inverted minors (2♦ would be forcing) but with traditional methods you would respond 2♣. South then rebids 3NT (18-19 or a long solid ♦ suit (unlikely)) and 6♦ is easily reached. If South had the ♠A then 7♦ is a good bid but it is difficult to reach unless you play Exclusion Blackwood. If your partner/bidding style is that the 2♣ bid by a passed hand may be passed then it's not so easy. I won't go into that as the solution is to play inverted minors.

The bottom line. Pre-empts take up bidding space and make reaching games and slams difficult. This is fine if it is the opponent's hand, but not when it's yours. Pre-empts are 7 card suits, best with just as many points in the suit as outside. J98632 certainly does not qualify.

And what is 1960? It's not really the year of my birth, but apparently the score for 7♦ redoubled, making. Don't ask me how they bid it, but if you double Jeff then expect a redouble. He's not renowned for holding back.

Another Slam with a VoidBoard 18 from Monday 2nd, N-S vul.

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ 62	♠ AJ	-	-	2♣	pass
♥ A9854	♥ KQJ3	2♦ (1)	pass	3♦ (2)	pass
♦ 872	♦ AKQJ1043	3♥	pass	5♣ (3)	pass
♣ J65	♣ -	5♥ (4)	pass	7♥	pass
		pass	pass		

A small slam was bid 4 times on Monday (the other 5 times it was just 5♦) but nobody bid the grand (this bidding is my concoction). 13 tricks were made on every occasion and I was asked how to bid the grand. I've mentioned it a few times, the answer is Exclusion Blackwood. In a situation where 4NT would be Blackwood, then a jump to the 5 level in a suit (not trumps) is Exclusion Blackwood – it asks for aces (or key cards if you play RKCB) not including the suit bid. Responses are the obvious steps.

- (1) negative or waiting
- (2) game forcing
- (3) exclusion Blackwood (or Exclusion RKCB)
- (4) 1 ace (or key card) outside the ♣ suit.

Redouble?Board 10 from Friday 30th, both vul.

North (G)	South (D)	West	North	East	South
♠ K8	♠ A10632	-	-	pass	1♠ (1)
♥ AK104	♥ Q8	dbl (2)	2♥ (3)	pass	2♠ (4)
♦ 1084	♦ Q53	pass	3♣	pass	3NT
♣ K865	♣ QJ9	pass	pass		

3NT is a poor contract, with 4 ♦'s and ♣A to lose, yet 3NT was the final contract at 4 of the 6 tables on Friday. Let's look at the bidding at this table: -

- (1) 11 points and a 5 card suit, do you open? No. This is a poor 11 count, the ♠ suit has no 'body', quacks in outside suits are very poor cards and the hand does not conform to the rule of 20. Opening here was the root cause of the problem.
- (2) Take-out. Usually short in ♠'s and promising 4 ♥'s – certainly by this player (me).
- (3) Obviously this is a very good hand and has game values (but not opposite this poor opener!). Anyway, what should North bid? With no interference then 2♣, a 2♥ bid promises 5 ♥'s as I explained recently in detail in news-sheets 62 and 64. But it's different after West's double at (2). The correct bid is redouble. With these ♥'s sitting over West's 4 card suit E-W are heading for a hiding. Wouldn't it be nice to see Terry go for 800?
- (4) N-S play 4 card majors, so 2♠ is fine here.

The bottom lines. Apply the rule of 20 to borderline openers and deduct for poor cards – queens and jacks (quacks) in short suits. After an intervening double, redouble with 9 or more points and a mis-fit for partner.

Responding to partner's take-out doubleBoard 6 from Friday 30th, E-W vul.

West (F)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ 862	♠ AK95	-	-	pass	1♥
♥ 983	♥ K4	pass	pass	dbl (1)	pass
♦ KQJ3	♦ 1054	1♠ (2)	pass	pass	2♥
♣ 1072	♣ 8654	pass	pass	2♠ (3)	pass
		pass	pass		

2♠ went minus 3, so -300, anyone to blame?

East's double at (1) is in the balancing seat and is fine. But what should West bid at (2)? Partner passed originally so can't have much and you don't want to encourage him, so West chose 1♠. Unfortunately this backfired. East presumably has 4 ♠'s for his double and he was then able to compete at (3) (The Law). West should bid 2♦ at (2), this does not promise values (it is still 0-9 pts) but it is the cheapest 4 card suit. If West had bid 2♦ then East would pass at (3) and defending 2♥ is the best spot for E-W.

The bottom line. A non-jump in response to partner's take-out double does not promise any values. Bid your cheapest 4 card suit.

Rebid or pass 1NT?Board 5 from Friday 30th, N-S vul.

West (E)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ K10732	♠ 5	-	pass	pass	pass
♥ Q3	♥ J1098	1♠	pass	1NT (1)	pass
♦ AK54	♦ Q973	pass (2)	pass		
♣ K10	♣ Q542				

First of all, East has just 5 points, so should he bid at (1) or pass? I would never pass, it is very likely that 1♠ will play badly and that there is a better spot. Just one pair passed 1♠ on Friday and it went -3 for a clear bottom.

So, 1NT is 'obvious' at (1). But should West pass? I would bid 2♦, with two doubletons it is usually best to play in a suit contract and even a 5-2 ♠ fit is fine. As it happens, 2♦ is the best contract and 1NT is just reasonable. What happened? 1NT made for an above average score and 2♦ made +1 at another table for a top.

The bottom lines? It is rarely correct to pass partner's opening with a singleton in his suit if you can scrape up a bid.

With a 5 card suit and a lower ranking 4 carder, it's usually best to bid them both.

Rebid a 5 card suit?Board 9 from Friday 30th, E-W vul.

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ 764	♠ KQ53	-	pass	pass	pass
♥ A73	♥ K10642	1♣	pass	1♥	pass
♦ AK6	♦ 984	1NT (1)	pass	pass (2)	pass
♣ QJ109	♣ 4				

This was the bidding at one table; 1NT made +1 but scored a cool bottom. Why? The contract was 1♥ or 2♥ at other tables (making 9,10 or even 11 tricks). Whose fault?

At two tables the contract was 1♥ by East, so presumably West passed at (1). A reasonable bid which worked on this occasion as East had 5♥'s. I would pass with just 3 card support if I had a doubleton elsewhere, but with this totally flat hand I prefer 1NT.

So should East bid 2♥ at (2)? He knows that West has at least 4♣'s, but he also has 2 or 3♥'s (I was West and I will not bid NT with a singleton or void in partner's suit). Unlike the example above, East cannot bid out his shape because the 4 carder is higher ranking. I would bid 2♥; there may be a 5-3 fit, but even a 5-2 usually plays better than a mis-fitting NT contract.

Incidentally, suppose that East had a similar hand with♥'s and♠'s interchanged. The bidding would then go 1♣ - 1♠ - 1NT - 2♥ - pass. The 2♥ bid in this situation is played as weak (even if not a passed hand), showing a 5♠-4♥ hand.

The bottom lines (for both of the above hands). Do not pass 1NT with an unsuitable shape.

A tricky 2nd bid

Board 12 from Friday 6th, N-S vul.

Dealer:	♠ K9743	West	North (H)	East	South
West	♥ A				
N-S vul	♦ 10975	pass (1)	pass	pass	1♥
	♣ QJ2	pass	1♠	pass	2♣
		pass	2NT (2)	pass	3NT (3)
		pass	pass	pass	
♠ AQ106	N	♠ 85			
♥ K82	W E	♥ 10973			
♦ K32	S	♦ AJ86			
♣ 1084		♣ 963			
	♠ J2		(1) 12 points, but with the totally flat shape		
	♥ QJ654		it is not worth an opener.		
	♦ Q4				
	♣ AK75				

3NT went down two for a bottom, anyone to blame? The main problem was North's 2NT bid at (2). When it is a mis-fit and partner bids both of your short suits it is rarely correct to bid NT with (sub)minimal values. 2NT shows 11-12 points here and North cannot bid this. The alternatives, however, are none too palatable. With a doubleton ♥ I would bid 2♥, but not with a singleton. That only leaves pass or 2♠; either could work out well (indeed, either would work with this lay-out). However, partner could still have as much as 15 or 16 points, perhaps with 3 card ♠ support – there could even be a ♠ game. I would be loath to pass and would try 2♠. Difficult. 3NT at (3) was also an overbid, of course.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: Double. A negative double. If you do not play negative doubles (why not?) then you cannot bid the hand properly and 2♦ is probably best. Tough if you miss a ♥ fit.
- Hand B: 2♣, Stayman.
- Hand C: Pass. Although 1♦ is not totally unreasonable. 3♦, however, is. (totally unreasonable). The hand is too good and the wrong shape for a pre-empt.
- Hand D: Pass. Not good enough for an opener.
- Hand E: 2♦. Bid out your shape.
- Hand F: 2♦. Your cheapest 4 card suit.
- Hand G: Redouble.
- Hand H: A tricky one to finish with. I would bid 2♠ although I suspect that many would pass – reasonable. What you should not do is bid 2NT. You are a point or two light – don't bid NT with mis-fits without full values (plus).



Last week's winners: Monday 9/2/04

Friday 13/2/04

N-S 1st Norman/Dave 62 % E-W 1st Jan/Niels 67 % 1st Norman/Dave 69%
 N-S 2nd Bob/Michael 60 % E-W 2nd Joe/Gary 60 % 2nd Jan/Terry 66%

Good show Norman and Dave. They have certainly established themselves as the home team to beat. And hasn't Jan improved, being little more than a beginner 12 months ago.

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

Hand A	Hand B	What do you open with Hand A?
♠ AKQ65	♠ AJ92	
♥ QJ10865	♥ 8754	With Hand B partner opens 1NT, what do you bid?
♦ KQ	♦ J6	
♣ -	♣ 643	
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C RHO opens 1♦, what is your bid?
♠ A974	♠ AQ54	
♥ J73	♥ AK65	With Hand D you open 1NT and partner transfers with 2♦.
♦ 3	♦ QJ3	What do you bid?
♣ K9832	♣ 65	
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E partner opens 1NT. You bid 2♣, Stayman, and get a 2♥ reply. What is your bid now?
♠ KQ106	♠ 3	
♥ A75	♥ J8732	With Hand F partner opens 1NT and you transfer with 2♦.
♦ 83	♦ A1084	What do you bid when partner completes the transfer with 2♥?
♣ AK93	♣ J72	

A Tactical Double ?Board 11 from Friday 13th, love all.

East	West	North	East	South
♠ KJ103	-	-	-	pass
♥ 74	pass	1♠	pass	1NT
♦ K3	pass	2NT	pass	3NT (1)
♣ 109432	pass	pass	dbl	all pass

The contract was 2 down for a clear top to E-W. All the N-S pairs went down in 2 or 3NT but it was only doubled at this table. So why did East double on these tram tickets? There were two reasons. First, South paused at (1) which indicated that N-S had just the minimum values for the contract. But secondly, North has a 5 card ♠ suit that will probably produce just one trick with this holding sitting over it. Things probably lie badly for declarer. The bottom lines. Take advantage of bad breaks (for the opposition). Take advantage of table presence (but at your peril!).

The Beginner's Page

We have discussed opener's first bid and partner's reply; so now let's look at opener's rebid.

When responder has made a limit bid.

Let's suppose that you open 1♥. If partner raises you suit or bids NT then he has told you how many points he has (limited his hand) and it's up to you to either bid game, invite or sign off/pass.

With Hands 1 & 2 you have opened 1♥: -

- Hand 1 (a) what is your rebid after partner bids 2♥?
- ♠ 64 (b) what is your rebid after partner bids 3♥?
- ♥ KJ865
- ♦ KJ96 (c) what is your rebid after partner bids 1NT?
- ♣ A5

- Hand 2 (d) what is your rebid after partner bids 2♥?
- ♠ A4 (e) what is your rebid after partner bids 3♥?
- ♥ KQ865
- ♦ K986 (f) what is your rebid after partner bids 1NT?
- ♣ A5

With Hand 3 you have opened 1♣,:-

- Hand 3 (g) what is your rebid after partner bids 2♣?
- ♠ 64 (h) what is your rebid after partner bids 3♣?
- ♥ KJ86
- ♦ KJ6 (i) what is your rebid after partner bids 1NT?
- ♣ AJ52

- (a) Pass. You have a minimum opener and partner has promised a max of 10 points, so not enough to even try for game.
- (b) Pass. You are minimal, so not usually quite enough for game.
- (c) 2♦. Bid your 2nd suit. This does not show anything more than a minimal opener with 5 ♥'s and 4 ♦'s.
- (d) 3♥. Inviting partner to bid game with a max. Partner will pass with 6-7 points and bid 4♥ with 8-10.
- (e) 4♥.
- (f) 2♦. Not quite enough for an invitational 2NT (you really need 17 points for that bid).
- (g) Pass. Partner has denied 4 ♥'s and you are not strong enough to bid again anyway.
- (h) Pass. Not enough for game.
- (i) Pass. Again, not enough for game and partner has denied 4 ♥'s.

Don't open two-suiters with 2♣Board 8 from Monday 9th, love all.

West (A)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ AKQ65	♠ 3	2♣	pass	2NT	pass
♥ QJ10865	♥ A3	3♥	pass	3NT	pass
♦ KQ	♦ J87653	4♠	pass	5♥	pass
♣ -	♣ KJ97	pass	pass		

Two pairs got too high (5♥) on this hand on Monday. I said in news-sheet 64 that two-suiters are best bid naturally and this hand bears it out. If you open 2♣ and get a positive response then you automatically get too high by the time you have shown both of your suits. If you play Benjamin twos and open 2♦ then it's even worse as you will always get too high even if partner does give a minimal (or relay) response. Seems like Brian Senior (who wrote the commentary on Monday's hands) agrees with me.

The bottom lines. Do not open 2♣ with strong two-suiters. 17 points is not usually enough for a 2♣ opener.

Invitational (+) values for StaymanBoard 10 from Monday 9th, both vul.

West (B)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ AJ92	♠ K76	-	-	1NT	pass
♥ 8754	♥ A10	2♣ (1)	pass	2♦	pass
♦ J6	♦ A94	2NT (2)	pass	3NT (3)	pass
♣ 643	♣ KQ987	pass	pass		

Two pairs again got too high (3NT) on this hand on Monday. I stated just last week the requirements for bidding Stayman. West took a wild gamble here (hoping that partner had a 4 card major and he could then pass). He got what he deserved – a 2♦ response. No way out now. It is a miserable hand for 2NT and East quite reasonably raised to 3NT. West got the asked for bottom, minus 3 so 300 away.

The bottom line. Only bid Stayman if you can cope with any response.

Don't double/overcall with rubbishBoard 2 from Monday 9th, N-S vul.

North (C)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ A974	♠ 1085	-	-	pass	pass
♥ J73	♥ 10862	1♦	dbl (1)	redbl	pass
♦ 3	♦ AQ84	pass	2♣	dbl	pass
♣ K9832	♣ 54	pass	pass		

Minus 1100. Exactly what bidding either 2♣ or double at (1), vulnerable, deserves. Double is a poor bid with this miserable ♥ suit and 2♣ is equally bad with the miserable ♣ suit. Pass is the only sensible bid, especially vulnerable. If the bidding subsides at a low level, you may be able to come in later.

Enough for Slam?

Board 3 from Friday 13th, E-W vul.

Just two pairs reached 6♠ on Friday (well done John/Dave, Alex/Jeff). Everybody else was in inferior contracts of 3NT, 5NT or 6NT. Let's look at the bidding at two tables: -

		<u>Table A</u>		<u>Table B</u>	
North (E)	South	North	South	North	South
♠ KQ106	♠ AJ32	-	1NT	-	1NT
♥ A75	♥ KQ109	2♣	2♥ (1)	2♣	2♥ (1)
♦ 83	♦ AJ6	3NT (2)	pass (3)	4♣ (4)	4♠
♣ AK93	♣ 76			5♣	5♥
				5NT	pass

South opens a Strong NT and North knows that it's combined 31-33 points, but should he go slamming? First, let's quote from news-sheet 62 - *To make 6NT you generally need about 33 points unless you have a good long suit.* Obviously North starts with Stayman and South bids 2♥ (always bid 2♥ with both majors). What now?

- (2) At Table A North knew all about the combined 31-33 points. He would have gone slamming if a fit had materialised but with no known fit, he settled for 3NT.
- (3) Now South got this wrong. When North used Stayman he *guaranteed* a 4 card major. Since he did not like ♥'s he *must* have 4 ♠'s. South should convert to 4♠ (especially as he has a weak doubleton). With a 4-4 fit and the additional knowledge that there is not duplication in shape, North would then go slamming.
- (4) This North took a more optimistic view, 4♣ at (4) was ace asking (and generally agrees ♥'s). With no known fit it is not a good bid – you really need to find a fit or establish if South is max or not, the number of aces is of secondary importance. If South is not max you will not make 6NT.

So, how should the bidding go? Table A up to (2) is fine, South should bid 4♠ at (3) and North then bids Blackwood etc to 6♠. If you wish to take a more optimistic approach with 6NT in mind if partner is max then bid 4NT at (4). This is a quantitative bid, saying that there is no ♥ fit and inviting South to bid slam if he is max or if there is a (♠) fit. With good ♠'s and good top cards, South should bid 6♠ (he knows that there is a 4-4 ♠ fit). With a max and no ♠ fit South would bid 6NT (although it does not cost to bid a decent 4 card minor on the way if you have one in case there is a fit there).

The bottom lines. A Stayman 2♣ bid promises a 4 card major. Always respond 2♥ to Stayman if holding both majors. If you hold both and partner bids NT, then convert to ♠'s (either part-score or game or slam(!)). Always look for the good 4-4 fit. You need 33+ points for 6NT (unless you have a long suit) but just 31 are often enough for a suit slam with a good 4-4 fit.

The Forcing Pass

Board 13 from Friday 13th, both vul

Perhaps a rather advanced concept, but it came up on Friday on this deal. One very basic example of the forcing pass is when your side clearly have the majority of the points, have bid to game and the opponents have sacrificed. You have the option of bidding on (maybe to slam), doubling (for penalties) or passing (provided partner has a turn to bid). One good variation is to pass when you have 1st round control of the enemy suit (usually a void) and this information is used by partner to either bid on or double.

Dealer:	♠ K5	West	North	East	South
South	♥ -				
both vul	♦ AK108653	-	1♦ (1)	1♥	pass (2)
	♣ AKJ6	4♥ (3)	5♦	pass	pass
		5♥ (4)	pass (5)	pass	pass
♠ AQ73	N	♠ J642			
♥ 108732	W E	♥ KQ964			
♦ J9	S	♦ Q2			
♣ 73		♣ 52			
	♠ 1098				
	♥ AJ5				
	♦ 74				
	♣ Q10984				

E-W went down 5 for a score of 500 to N-S, but that was a poor return for N-S's cold small slam in either minor. Let's evaluate the bidding: -

- (1) I have said not to open 2♣ with two-suited hands, but this is more like a one-suiter. However, the ♠ K may need protecting from the opening lead and I do actually prefer the 1♦ opening chosen by this North to 2♣. Either is acceptable.
- (2) With good ♥'s I would prefer a 1NT bid here.
- (3) With 10 combined trumps – bid to the limit (10 tricks). It's The Law, so 4♥ is fine.
- (4) This, however, is not so fine. The last 4♥ bid was excellent and did its job (they missed slam). Bidding again is just silly – it violates The Law; it violates the principle of bidding your hand just once; and it gives the opponents a choice between getting a top for the 1400 (5 down doubled) on offer or else bidding the slam (+1 = 1390) that they had missed.
- (5) Here we have the forcing pass – an excellent bid as long as partner understands it! In this situation it indicated first round control in ♥'s (a void) and is an invitation for South to bid 6♦. Failing that, South is obliged to double.

The bottom lines.

- West – Obey The Law. Bid your hand only once.
- South – If you can describe your hand in on go, then do so. So 1NT at (2) to show a good 7-10 points and a ♥ stop. With a bare minimum (6 or 7) or no ♥ stop then pass.
- Do not pass a forcing pass.

4♠ scores more than 5♦Board 16 from Friday 13th, E-W vul.

Four pairs reached the excellent 4♠ contract on Friday, with one pair in the inferior 5♦ and just one in a silly 3NT.

West	East	West (me)	North	East	South
♠ KJ8542	♠ Q10	1♠	pass	2♦	2♥
♥ 9	♥ K87	3♦ (1)	pass	4♦ (2)	pass
♦ A1074	♦ K86532	4♠ (3)	pass	pass (4)	pass
♣ A9	♣ KQ				

The first real decision is West's rebid at (1). A six card major suit is certainly rebiddable but I prefer to support partner. After partner's 4♦ bid at (2) the West hand is worth game (the singleton in opponent's suit is a big plus). I like the 4♠ bid here at (3); basically it says that West has a good 6 card ♠ suit (or very good 5) and leaves the choice of 4♠ or 5♦ up to partner. With ♠Q10 East's decision is easy at (4).

Super-Accept of a transferBoard 14 from Friday 13th, love all.

Five pairs reached the excellent 4♥ contract with minimal values on Friday, with just two pairs settling for a partscore. Here's the bidding at our table: -

West (F)	East (D)	West (Jan)	North	East (me)	South
♠ 3	♠ AQ54	-	-	1NT	pass
♥ J8732	♥ AK65	2♦	pass	3♥ (1)	pass
♦ A1084	♦ QJ3	4♥	pass	pass	pass
♣ J72	♣ 65				

The 3♥ bid at (1) was a super accept, showing a non-min and 4 trumps. This was a simple variation and West had no problem in then going to game. If East had simply made a normal accept then it is doubtful if the West hand is worth an effort (indeed, West said that he would have passed and I agree). Playing super-accepts takes the strain off of responder._

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: 1♥ (and reverse into ♠'s next go). Don't open two-suiters with 2♣.
- Hand B: Pass. Do not bid Stayman as a 2♦ response will fix you.
- Hand C: Pass. Both dbl and 2♣ are very poor bids.
- Hand D: You should super-accept. So either 3♥ or 3♣, whatever your methods are.
- Hand E: 3NT (or 4NT - quantitative - if you feel aggressive). Partner will then convert to ♠'s if he has 4♠'s. The hand is not good enough to launch into slam without a known fit.
- Hand F: Pass. The hand is not good enough for a game forcing 3♦. Inviting with 3♥ shows a 6 card suit and may be a disaster if partner is minimum and/or has only 2♥'s - this ♥ suit is very poor. An invitational 2NT is a gross distortion. The only thing that would make me bid on with this hand is if partner super-accepts!

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.



Club News Sheet – No. 70

27/2/2004



Last week's winners: Monday 23/2/04

Friday 27/2/04

1st Paul (Ire)/Joe 61%
 2nd John/Phyllis 58%

1st Mike/Tomas 61%
 2nd Clive/Terry 58%

There are a few Mikes around, but the one who won on Friday is the Canadian bachelor. 61% is a good score, especially for a relatively inexperienced player. Guess he has a good teacher?

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

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A you open 1♦ and partner responds 1♠. (a) what is your rebid? Suppose that you chose a simple 2♣, then (b) what do you do when partner bids 2♦?
♠ KQ ♥ 83 ♦ AK754 ♣ KQ43	♠ KQ942 ♥ 10 ♦ K643 ♣ 1096	With hand B partner opens 1♠, what do you bid?
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C partner opens 1NT. You try Stayman but partner responds 2♦, so what do you bid now? With hand D RHO opens 1♠, what is your bid?
♠ J954 ♥ Q1076 ♦ AK86 ♣ 5	♠ AQ5 ♥ Q10874 ♦ J63 ♣ K7	
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E you open 1♠ and partner raises to 4♠. What now? With Hand F partner opens 1♥ and RHO overcalls 1♠, what is your bid?
♠ AJ875 ♥ AQJ82 ♦ A ♣ J5	♠ AK82 ♥ 43 ♦ A643 ♣ 1094	
Hand G	Hand H	With Hand G partner opens 1♦ and RHO overcalls a weak 3♥. You are vulnerable, they are not. What do you do? With Hand H partner opens – you've guessed it – a weak 2♠. I guess that it's not really a surprise, but what do you bid?
♠ K3 ♥ A1065 ♦ K5 ♣ K10985	♠ - ♥ Q10864 ♦ AQ1085 ♣ KQ9	
Hand J	Hand K	With Hand J RHO opens 1♠. Nobody vulnerable, so what do you bid? With Hand K you open 1♥, LHO overcalls 1♠ and this is passed round to you. You are playing negative doubles, what is your bid?
♠ - ♥ 864 ♦ 10862 ♣ A109843	♠ 7 ♥ QJ952 ♦ J109 ♣ AKQ3	

The Beginner's Page

Last week we looked at our rebid when partner responds in a new suit. We continue the theme this week: -

Hand 7	Hand 8	Hand 7 is too weak for 1NT, so you open 1♦. But what is your rebid if partner responds 1♥? You have the correct point count for a 1NT rebid but that is wrong because it denies a 4 card major. Rebid 1♠.
♠ AQ74	♠ AQJ4	Hand 8 is too strong for 1NT. This time open 1♦ and rebid 2♠ over 1♥. It has the values for 2NT but that again denies 4♠'s.
♥ A54	♥ A54	
♦ J963	♦ AJ83	
♣ Q2	♣ K2	

What do you do if you don't have a good 2nd suit to bid and can't bid NT? You can rebid a 6 card suit: -

Hand 9	Hand 10	Here we open 1♥ and partner responds 1♠ in both cases. Rebidding a 6 card suit is fine, so with Hand 9 you bid 2♥. Hand 10 is stronger and 3♥ is the bid. This tells partner that you have a good hand with a good ♥ suit and invites him to bid game if he can.
♠ Q7	♠ K7	
♥ AQJ654	♥ AQJ654	
♦ J63	♦ J63	
♣ Q2	♣ A2	

And here are a couple of trickier hands: -

Hand 11	Hand 12	In both cases you open 1♣. But what do you rebid with Hand 11 when partner responds 1♦? A 2♦ bid is not unreasonable, but I prefer 1NT. Always support major suits, but NT usually scores more than minor suit contracts. With Hand 12 partner responds 1♠ to your 1♣ opening. With weak ♥'s it is better to support with 2♠ than bid 1NT. This bid usually shows 4 card support, but not always.
♠ QJ7	♠ AQ7	
♥ K6	♥ 64	
♦ QJ43	♦ QJ43	
♣ KJ42	♣ KJ42	

So. Don't be in a rush to support partner's minor suit if NT is a sensible option, but support a major suit even with just 3 cards if the shape dictates.

And what should opener do if partner's original response was a strong jump shift?

Here we have something different. Partner's jump has made the auction forcing to game, so there is no need for you to jump with a good hand. In fact, the reverse is often the case. Since a jump takes up bidding space, we often bid slowly with good hands and jump with bad ones. This is called fast arrival: -

Hand 13	Hand 14	With hand 13 we opened 1♦, with the intention of bidding 2♣ over partner's 1♥/♠/NT response. However, partner bids 2♥. This is game forcing and guarantees a good long ♥ suit. Now 3♣ here would not be unreasonable, but I prefer 4♥. You have adequate support for ♥'s but that's all. So don't encourage partner. With Hand 14 we again opened 1♦ and partner jumped to 2♥. This hand is much better in support of ♥'s. Bid 3♥, forcing, and showing decent support for partner.
♠ K7	♠ A7	
♥ Q6	♥ Q64	
♦ KJ543	♦ KJ643	
♣ QJ42	♣ A42	

Void in partner's weak two!Board 20 from Friday 27th, both vul.

North	South (H)	West	North (me)	East	South (Clive)
♠ KJ10964	♠ -				
♥ K53	♥ Q10864	pass	2♠	pass	pass (1)
♦ 72	♦ AQ1085	pass			
♣ 64	♣ KQ9				

There was a bad ♠ split (6-1) and so was this a disaster for N-S? It certainly was, but not in the way you may expect. Read on. First of all my opinion of the bidding.

The weak 2♠ opening is excellent (texture in the suit) and obvious (to most players), but what about South's pass at (1). What did you bid with Hand H in this week's bidding quiz? Pass is the only sensible bid. In our system 2NT would be Ogust (enquiring about opener's hand) and any other bid is forcing. It's a mis-fit, so South should bail out *now*. _

So why was it a disaster for N-S? – That's just my warped sense of humour - it was a disaster for all of the *other* N-S pairs! And what happened? One down at this table, so 100 away, a clear top! Two other N-S pairs found an inelegant 3NT (minus 2 – luckily not doubled but still 200 away). Another pair got to 3♠ and went two off (I believe that that pair do not play weak twos and so North opened 3♠?). I would not open at the 3 level vulnerable, but then I like to play weak twos. One other pair did actually find the ♥ fit and played in 3♥, but that was not a roaring success as it was doubled and went for 800!

The bottom line. With a mis-fit, bail out ASAP, preferably before you get doubled! It is rarely correct to bid NT with a void in partner's suit.

A tricky bidBoard 18 from Monday 23rd, N-S vul.

West (A)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ KQ	♠ A10964	-	-	pass	pass
♥ 83	♥ Q2	1♦	pass	1♠	pass
♦ AK754	♦ 983	2♣ (1)	pass	2♦ (2)	pass
♣ KQ43	♣ 1085	4♦ (3)	pass	pass	pass

4♦ was minus 3 for a bottom, what went wrong?

Obviously the first two bids are correct, but what should West rebid at (1)? 3♣ perhaps? No! The hand is not good enough for a game forcing jump to 3♣. With a 3rd ♠ it would be close, but with no known fit 2♣ is quite adequate. 2♦ at (2) was simple preference and could be just two card support.

Now this 4♦ at (3) is the problem. Remember that partner has not supported ♦'s – he only gave preference. So what should West bid? Pass is a bit feeble but reasonable, 3♦ is probably also reasonable. But with two top ♠'s I would bid 2♠. This bid shows this shape exactly (or possibly 3154 or something similar) and a good hand. If partner has manky ♠'s he will convert to 3♦, fine. With this East hand he would simply pass 2♠.

And what happened? A mixed bag of results, but 2♠ was bid and made at one table and was the best spot.

Systems on, Systems off?

Let's assume that you play Stayman and Transfers over partner's 1NT. That's all very simple, but what if the opponents interfere before you get a chance to bid? I prefer bids to be natural here, so Stayman and Transfers do not apply – systems off. A good scheme is to play Lebensohl (it's described in the 2003 yearbook).

And what system do you play if LHO opens 1 of a suit and partner overcalls 1NT? Most people play that Stayman and Transfers apply here – systems on.

Systems on

Board 19 from Monday 23rd, E-W vul.

Dealer:	♠ 952	West	North	East	South
South	♥ QJ74				
E-W vul	♦ 10873	-	-	-	1♣
	♣ A2	1NT (1)	pass	2♦ (2)	pass
		2♥	pass	4♥ (3)	pass
♠ KQ8	N	♠ J74	pass	dbl (4)	pass
♥ K10	W E	♥ A96532	pass		
♦ KJ62	S	♦ 54			
♣ K763		♣ Q5	(1) 15-18		
	♠ A1063				
	♥ 8				
	♦ AQ9				
	♣ J10984				

E-W went down just 1, but minus 200 is not a good score on a part-score deal. Anything wrong or just unlucky? Let's analyse the auction: -

- (2) This is the opposite situation to where your 1NT opening has been overcalled. When partner overcalls 1NT then I prefer to play 'systems on'. I.e. 2♣ is Stayman and 2♦/♥ are transfers.
- (3) This is an overbid. Partner has promised only 2♥'s. Even 3♥ here is a bit pushy (but just about OK).
- (4) So then, would you double with this hand? You have no guarantee of setting the opponents and a double may help declarer in the play of the hand. On the other hand, partner has opened and your ♣ A and four trumps will be awkward for declarer. On balance, I think that double is OK at pairs but I would pass at teams.

And what happened? The contract was one down and N-S scored the 'magic 200' – that's why it's a reasonable double at pairs. At pairs, the difference between 100 and 200 is usually the difference between a top and a poor score. At teams this difference is not so important and it's a disaster if they make (with an overtrick). 2♥ or 3♥ either made or went down at other tables; 4♥ down one undoubled would have only scored just above average for N-S.

Editor's Note

There is more about intervention over 1NT (stolen bid, double of 2♣ as Stayman, double of 2♦ as a transfer) etc in news-sheet 110.

Systems off

Board 7 from Monday 23rd, both vul.

Dealer:	♠ Q8	West	North	East	South
South	♥ AQ943	-	-	-	1NT (1)
Both vul	♦ 8532	2♣ (2)	2♥ (3)	3♣ (4)	3♥ (5)
	♣ 74	4♣ (6)	pass	pass	pass
♠ K965	N	♠ J1032	(1) 12-14		
♥ J	W E	♥ 10652	(2) natural		
♦ QJ10	S	♦ 97			
♣ AQ952		♣ KJ8			
	♠ A74				
	♥ K87				
	♦ AK64				
	♣ 1063				

E-W went down 3, minus 300 is not a good score on a part-score deal. So who is to blame for E-W getting too high? Let's analyse the auction: -

- (3) After intervention it's simplest to play systems off (no Stayman or transfers). So 2♥ here is natural and just competitive (a 5 card suit).
- (4) Partner has only promised 5 ♣'s, but when one overcalls 1NT with a minor suit, then it is very often a 6 carder. With top ♣'s, 3♣ is quite reasonable with this hand, you don't want to sell out to 2♥.
- (5) Again, partner has only promised a 5 card suit and competing values; but with good support and top cards, 3♥ is fine.
- (6) So this is the problem! Obey The Law. The initial overcall promised 5 cards and the number of ♣'s in your hand has remained constant. To venture to the 4 level you need 10 trumps. Partner may well have supported with just 3 cards at his last turn. This hand must pass (especially vulnerable!).

And what happened? 4♣ cost 300. 3♥ made exactly at some tables and scored about average.

3♦ after Stayman?

Board 3 from Monday 23rd, E-W vul.

West	East (C)	West	North	East	South
♠ AK7	♠ J954	1NT	pass	2♣	pass
♥ K8	♥ Q1076	2♦	pass	3♦ (1)	pass
♦ 10753	♦ AK86	4♦	pass	pass	pass
♣ AQ62	♣ 5				

4♦ is obviously a silly contract whether it makes or not. So what should East bid at (1)? First of all, there is no universally defined definition of what 3♦ here means, it has to be agreed with your partner. Playing it as natural (as here) is one alternative – but the bid really should be looking for slam and East needs a stronger hand. The best bid at (1) is 3NT.

The bottom line. I've said it before, if 3NT is a viable alternative it's usually better than five (or 4) of a minor.

Trust PartnerBoard 8 from Monday 23rd, love all.

Dealer:	♠ K87642	West	North	East (D)	South
North	♥ AK2				
Love all	♦ AK74	-	1♠	dbl (1)	2♣ (2)
	♣ -	2♥ (3)	3♦ (4)	3♥ (5)	pass
		pass	dbl (6)	pass	4♣ (7)
		pass (8)	pass	pass (9)	
♠ J3	N	♠ AQ5			
♥ J963	W E	♥ Q10874			
♦ 852	S	♦ J63			
♣ A983		♣ K7			
	♠ 109				
	♥ 5				
	♦ Q109				
	♣ QJ106542				

E-W went down 4, converting a near top into a bottom (3♥ went minus two at another table, undoubled). There are a number of interesting points in the auction: -

- (1) I cannot see the point of doubling with this hand, overcall 2♥. If you double and partner responds in a minor you will miss a possible 5-3 ♥ fit. If you double and then bid 2♥ over partner's 2♣/♦ then that shows a much stronger hand.
- (2) Now I have discussed this bid before (news-sheet 58). The bid is non-forcing after a double and shows a decent long suit with about 6-9 points. This hand is pushing it slightly. But 2♣ is OK and pass is also quite reasonable, but I prefer 3♣ as long as you have agreed that it is a weak bid after a double.
- (3) If South had passed then West would have to bid 2♥ even with no points. Once South had bid then West does not have to, so a bid here is a 'free bid' and promises some values – about 6-9 points with 4 ♥'s. Fine.
- (4) North has a nice hand, but no fit for partner. Still, passing is a bit chicken and I think that 3♦ is fine (2♠ would also be OK).
- (5) West has promised 4 ♥'s (and values) and so The Law says that 3♥ is fine here.
- (6) A nice hand, so do you sell out with a pass, double, or bid 3♠? Partner has not promised much, but he has promised ♣'s. Defending 3♥ looks fine as you can draw 2 or 3 rounds of trumps when you get in. I think that dbl is worth a go, especially at pairs.
- (7) I don't like this. Partner has bid ♠'s. Partner has bid ♦'s. Partner has doubled ♥'s for penalties. He has no ♣'s!! Pass or 3♠ are the alternatives. I prefer pass, but then doubling opponents is my favourite pastime – teach 'em a lesson.
- (8&9) Excellent. Do not be greedy and double – they may retreat into 4♠ which makes!

And what happened? 3 down, so -150, but that's a bottom for N-S. At other tables N-S are collecting plus scores in 3♠. Jon/Jan managed to get themselves doubled in 4♠ and made an overtrick (the East hand should not double 4♠). 3♥ doubled goes one down.

The bottom lines. If you have overbid, do not compound the felony by removing partner's penalty double. Trust partner.

A one-level penalty double?

Board 10 from Friday 27th, both vul.

Dealer: ♠ AK82
East ♥ 43
Both vul ♦ A643
♣ 1094

♠ QJ653 N ♠ 1094
♥ AK7 W E ♥ 1086
♦ 8 S ♦ KQ752
♣ 8752 ♣ J6
♠ 7
♥ QJ952
♦ J109
♣ AKQ3

Table A:

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

Table B:

West	North (F) (me)	East	South (K) (Clive)
-	-	pass	1♥
1♠	pass (3)	pass	dbl (4)
pass	pass	pass	

So what do you think of the bidding? An obvious 1♥ opening and an equally obvious 1♠ overcall. The bidding was then as table A at 4 tables, with just Clive/me diverging: -

Table A: So what do you do at (1). 11 points and two solid stoppers in their suit, so 2NT is 'obvious'? I disagree. Evaluating your hand is not just a matter of adding up 4 for an ace etc. This hand started off as a good 11 count. Partner's 1♥ opening has not improved it but with no interference the hand would still be worth 11 points, so 2NT (but you would obviously bid the ♠ suit first). So bid 1♠ and then 2NT over partner's 2♣ rebid. But things are different once West has overcalled in ♠'s. Your best suit (♠'s) is not a possible source of tricks anymore and the hand is no longer worth 11 points. So after the 1♠ overcall 1NT is the bid. After North's 2NT overbid South's 3NT is very reasonable.

Table B: Now N-S play negative doubles and North has to make a decision at (3). If I chose to bid NT, I would settle for 1NT. But there is an alternative; when you have a mis-fit for partner then it is often best to defend, so I chose a 'penalty' pass (I expected to make 3 ♠ tricks, whereas I only expect two in a NT contract). Normally it is desirable to have 5 trumps, but with these quick tricks I think that defending is probably the best bet – there is no guarantee that 3NT will make your way and setting them just 1 (200) will likely be a good score. Playing negative doubles the opener should re-open with a double at (4) about 95% of the time – if it is at all feasible that partner has a penalty hand. South obliged and 1♠ doubled was the final contract.

And what happened? E-W went down just 1, so 200 to N-S. And at other tables? This +200 was the only entry in the N-S column! 3NT by N-S went one or two down at *every* table. So it looks like 24 points does not always make 3NT, eh?? Or else the North hand is not worth 11 points?? Either way, it's time to pass the cucumber sandwiches.

The bottom lines. Hand evaluation is a process that continues throughout the bidding. Upgrade/downgrade your hand accordingly. For example, if North's ♠ holding was ♠AQ109 then this would be an enormous upgrade after the overcall. ♠AKxx needs downgrading. If you could not stomach my 'penalty' pass then bid 1NT, not 2NT, with this North hand. This is probably a much safer way to get a good score on the board

Pre-empt Just Once

Board 15 from Friday 27th, N-S vul.

Dealer:	♠ K3	West	North (G)	East	South
South	♥ A1065				
N-S vul	♦ K5	-	-	-	1♦
	♣ K10985	3♥ (1)	3NT (2)	pass	pass
		4♥ (3)	dbl (4)	pass	pass
		pass			
♠ 764	N	♠ J1082			
♥ QJ97432	W E	♥ -			
♦ A6	S	♦ 10974			
♣ Q		♣ AJ763			
	♠ AQ95				
	♥ K8				
	♦ QJ832				
	♣ 42				

So what about this bidding? The 1♦ opening is obvious. And the weak 3♥ overcall? It's not that pretty a suit (lots of holes) but non-vulnerable it is the obvious bid. So what does North do at (2)? To me it's clear, 3NT (with double – for penalties – a poor 2nd choice). So 3NT goes round to West; 4♥ here is a terrible bid. I believe his thinking went along the lines 'they are vulnerable, we are not, they will get 600, 3 down only loses 500'. This is muddled thinking. You should pre-empt (to the max) just one time. You have deprived N-S of bidding space with 3♥ and 3NT may well not be the best contract for them. That is what pre-empting is all about – it is not about conceding 800 penalties. This West hand is not worth 4♥; but if it was, then bid 4♥ first go. Here, North has advertised a good hand with good ♥'s, N-S have had time to exchange information and they will get the decision (double or 4NT) right if you bid again.

And what happened? West got exactly what he deserved – minus 800 and a clear bottom. And the other tables? Well, that baffles me slightly; one N-S pair correctly landed in 3NT but two pairs allowed West to play in 3♥ (undoubled) and the other in 3♥ doubled. 3NT at (2) looks obvious to me (I would double if the vulnerability was the other way round). Passing 3♥ is simply, well,? Words fail me.

The bottom lines. Pre-empt just once (to the limit). Having pre-empted, *never* bid again unless partner invites. At unfavourable vulnerability, (initially) look for game your way rather than a penalty.

Tea and Cucumber Sandwiches

One of our members took me to task over my comments that Hand D last week (♠K32 ♥J63 ♦972 ♣AK53) was not worth 11 points and should pass a weak 1NT opening by partner. His opinion was that any full-blooded Englishman should bid 2NT over a weak NT and that 3NT usually makes with a flat combined 24 points in England (he bid 1NT – 2NT – 3NT and went down). If you are 'unlucky' enough to go down then that's tough, you have done your duty to Queen and country. And you can discuss your misfortune whilst consuming the tea and cucumber sandwiches afterwards.

John G and myself do not partake of cucumber sandwiches, nor do we bid 3NT with two flat hands totalling 24 points. And is the defensive play in the UK really that poor?

Just to set the record straight, the 2NT response to a 1 level opener (or a weak 1NT) is 11-12 points. I will always bid 2NT if the hand *is* worth 11 points (after evaluation). Hand D last week (and hand F on the next page) *are not* worth 11 points.

The 5-3 Major Suit Fit

Board 11 from Friday 27th, love all.

I am continually saying that one should search for the 4-4 major suit fit. There are always exceptions, but 4♥/♠ usually plays better than 3NT. But what about the 5-3 fit? Now 4♥/♠ is often the best contract, but nowhere near as often as with a 4-4 fit. Why? With the 4-4 fit you have flexibility and may get the extra trick with a ruff in either hand. The 5-3 fit is not flexible, and you will only get the extra trick if you get a ruff with the short trump hand. So, if you have unbid suits *well* covered 3NT may be best, as it is on this deal from Friday: -

Dealer:	♠ A7	West (J)	North (G)	East	South
South	♥ Q97		(me)		(Clive)
Love all	♦ J743				
	♣ QJ52	-	-	-	1♠
		pass (1)	1NT	pass	3♥
♠ -	N	pass	3NT	pass	pass (2)
♥ 864	W E	pass			
♦ 10862	S				
♣ A109843					
	♠ Q96543				
	♥ J10				
	♦ A95				
	♣ 76				
	♠ KJ1082	(1) Non-vulnerable, a weak 3♣ is a good			
	♥ AK532	alternative here. With a decent 6 card suit			
	♦ KQ	(good intermediates) it is better than a 2NT			
	♣ K	distorted (unusual – the UNT).			

- (2) South has shown 5 ♠'s and 4+ ♥'s. Many players would bid 4♥ here – hoping for a 5-3 ♥ fit or otherwise to play in ♠'s. Partner, however, knows that you have at least 9 cards in the majors and has opted for 3NT. With points to spare and excellent high cards in the minors and poor ♥ intermediates, passing 3NT is an excellent choice here. This is an example of when the 5-3 fit should be ignored. If North had ♥xxx instead of ♥Qxx then there would be an unnecessary ♥ loser in addition to the two aces if playing in ♥'s.

And what happened? 3NT made 11 tricks and would normally be an excellent score. Certainly better than 5♥ which also made 11 tricks. There were, however, a few odd results. Two(!) pairs reached 4♠, silly. Both were doubled (dangerous when 4NT or 5♥ makes), one made and one went down. I would most certainly not double 4♠ if they have two(!) spots to run to (let it be). So why did the excellent 3NT only get an average? It was beaten by 4♠* making, but also by a somewhat illegible scribble on the score sheet where it appears that E-W conceded -1100 in 5♦ doubled. Is that really true, Bob/Michael? How on earth can East end up playing in ♦'s? Even if West bid an UNT 5♦ is far too high. Maybe West bid 2NT and then bid his ♣ suit later? – that is pre-empting twice and asking for a bottom. I would not mind, but it (and the silly 4♠*) robbed me/Clive of a well bid top!

The bottom lines: -

- A 5-3 major suit fit is usually best, but prefer 3NT if you have oodles of points and all unbid suits well stopped.
- Pre-empt only once (UNT is a pre-empt).
- If you pre-empt with UNT or Michaels and then bid again, many players (including me) would take that as a very strong hand.
- UNT (and Michaels cue bids) are probably the most abused conventions out there; they should promise 5-5 in the specified suits; not 5-4, not 6-4 etc. They are generally weak bids, but if you bid again then most experienced players play that they were actually very strong.
- And note that by very strong, I mean just that – not just a 5-5 14 count.

Raising Partner's Major directly to 4 is weak

Board 14 from Monday 23rd, love all.

North (B)	South (E)	West	North	East	South
♠ KQ942	♠ AJ875	-	-	pass	1♠
♥ 10	♥ AQJ82	pass	4♠ (1)	pass	4NT (2)
♦ K643	♦ A	pass	5♣	pass	6♠
♣ 1096	♣ J5	pass	pass	pass	

No less than three of our *leading* pairs got too high (6♠) on this hand on Monday. Who's fault? Basically, what is North's 4♠ bid at (1)? In beginner's books you will read that it shows game going values with 4 + card support for partner's major. More advanced players do not bid like this, 4♠ is pre-emptive; showing 5 card support and a weak hand. With a stronger hand, bid another suit (2♦ in this case) and subsequently jump to 4♠ (unless you play more sophisticated methods such as Jacoby 2NT and/or Swiss or splinters).

South has a nice hand, but should most certainly pass 4♠. Even if you do try Blackwood at (2) South should then give up in 5♠ and hope that that contract is not defeated. This North hand is pretty much max for it's 4♠ bid.

The bottom line. A direct jump to 4♥/♠ after partner opens one in the suit is weak. It shows 5 card support but is *most certainly not* a slam invitation.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: (a) 2♣. The hand is not good enough for a game forcing 3♣.
(b) 2♠. Pass or 3♦ are reasonable, but the best bid is 2♠.
- Hand B: 4♠. This is best played as a weakish bid with 5 trumps. This particular hand is about max for the bid – it could be considerably weaker.
- Hand C: 3NT. Occasionally the opponents will run a number of ♣ tricks, but usually 3NT will make. You do not have the values for a ♦ game. Looking for a Moysian (4-3) fit in a major is incorrect as if you have to take ♣ ruffs, it's with the long trumps.
- Hand D: 2♥. I went over this last week (remember 'bad bidding from books'?). When you have a five card major, then bid it! Contrary to some people's belief, a double is not necessarily a stronger bid than an overcall. And an overcall at the two level should have about the values of an opening bid or better (say 11-17 pts).
- Hand E: Pass. Partner has a weak hand with 5 ♠'s. Slam is very unlikely and if you make an attempt then even 5♠ will go down opposite a minimum hand. This hand is *nowhere near* good enough to look for slam after a weak 4♠ response.
- Hand F: 1NT. The hand started off as a good 11 points. Partner bidding ♥'s is a slight minus, but it's still worth 11 points. RHO's 1♠ overcall, however, means that you only have two ♠ tricks. So downgrade and bid just 1NT. Another reasonable but pushy alternative is a penalty double (or a penalty pass if you play negative doubles).
- Hand G: 3NT. Double is reasonable, but not the best bid at this vulnerability. Pass is pathetic.
- Hand H: Pass. A mis-fit. You have nowhere near the values for game and any bid that you make other than pass could well lead to disaster. Under *no* circumstances bid NT in a situation like this. It's a mis-fit, so bail out at the *earliest* opportunity (now). Who knows, you may even get lucky if the opponents compete.
- Hand J: 3♣, if you play weak jump overcalls. Failing that 2♣ is acceptable to some partnerships but I would require a better hand for a 2 level overcall. Pass is a very sensible alternative. But how about the dreaded UNT (showing a weak hand with both minors)? I don't like it; these ♦'s can hardly be called a suit. No. Either a weak 3♣ or pass.
- Hand K: Double. When you play negative doubles it is virtually always correct to re-open with a double in case partner has a penalty hand.



Last week's winners: Monday 1/3/04

Friday 5/3/04

1st Bob/Michael 69%2nd David/Kenneth 60%1st John G/John 65%2nd Dave/Norman 65%

Interesting results (and boards) on Friday, with John/John just winning by one point. Only 3 of the 10 pairs managed above 50% – Mike (Can)/Philip got a very respectable 59% for 3rd place. I guess that the 6 ♠ doubled, making, when others were playing in 1 ♠ helped? In fact, there was a lot of 'silly' slam bidding on Friday (and Monday), you get my opinions later.

I was just kibitzing on Friday; it was great to see the Brit foursome finishing 15%+ ahead of the likes of Michael, Bob, Chuck, Clive, Hans, Alex, Jeff etc. (all less than 50%!). Rule Britannia. And Mike/Philip(also a Brit) finishing a clear 10%+ ahead of them is also quite something, eh?

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

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A partner opens 1 ♣, what is your response?
♠ A862	♠ J10964	
♥ AK65	♥ J98	With Hand B LHO opens 1NT, partner overcalls 2 ♦ (natural)
♦ A543	♦ Q10943	and RHO bids 3 ♣. What do you do?
♣ 5	♣ -	
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C partner opens 1 ♥. You respond 1 ♠ and partner rebids 2 ♦. What is your bid?
♠ K1096	♠ 105	
♥ K54	♥ -	
♦ 107	♦ K10974	With Hand D partner opens 1 ♠, what do you bid?
♣ KQJ7	♣ K98642	
Hand E	Hand F	Just 12 points, would you open with Hand E?
♠ 762	♠ K3	
♥ AQ106	♥ AKJ763	With Hand F RHO opens 1 ♠, What do you do?
♦ KQJ9	♦ 652	
♣ 93	♣ AJ	
Hand G	Hand H	With Hand G partner opens 1 ♦. Now your ♠'s are much better than your ♥'s, but we all know (I hope) that a 4 card suit is a 4 card suit. To bid 1 ♠ would deny 4 ♥'s. So you correctly bid 1 ♥ and partner raises to 2 ♥. So what now? Do you go slamming?
♠ AKQ4	♠ A7	
♥ 8743	♥ K8	
♦ 65	♦ KQ2	
♣ AK6	♣ AKQ984	What do you open with hand H?
Hand J	Hand K	Suppose that you play 2 ♣ followed by 2NT as 23-24 pts and 2 ♣ followed by 3NT as 25+ points. You open Hand J with 2 ♣ but what is your rebid?
♠ K72	♠ Q10975	
♥ AKQ	♥ 108	
♦ AKJ	♦ Q94	With Hand K partner opens 1 ♠ and RHO doubles, what is your bid?
♣ KQ72	♣ 1083	

The Beginner's Page

Responder's 2nd bid

We have already looked at the opening bid, responder's bid and opener's rebid. Time to look at what responder should do at his 2nd turn.

What you (as responder) should do depends upon your hand (obviously) but also upon what your partner had done. By the time that partner has opened and rebid you have a fair idea about his strength and shape. Quite often, his 2nd bid will have either shown a strong, invitational or weak hand and you bid (or pass) accordingly. This week we look at the situation where opener simply supports our suit: -

Hand 1	Hand 2	With these hands 1-6 partner opened 1♦. You responded 1♥ and partner bid 2♥. What do you do?
♠ A764	♠ A764	With Hand 1 you should pass. You have a minimum and partner has shown no more than a minimum.
♥ A754	♥ AK54	With Hand 2 you have game values – so bid game! 4♥.
♦ 987	♦ Q87	
♣ 85	♣ 85	
Hand 3	Hand 4	So that's quite simple, pass with a minimum and bid game with game values (an opening hand +). But what if you are non-min but not sure of game? Simple, we invite partner, by bidding 3♥: -
♠ AJ64	♠ A864	Hand 3 has 11 points and so you invite game by bidding 3♥.
♥ AQ54	♥ AQ542	Hand 4 also has 11 points, but this hand has improved when partner has supported your 5 card suit. So bid game, 4♥.
♦ 987	♦ J8	
♣ 85	♣ 85	

Actually, there are more sophisticated ways to invite game rather than simply bidding 3 of the suit (trial bids), but that's for a later date.

Hand 5	Hand 6	Sometimes we will be dealt a hand that is too strong to simply sign off in game.
♠ A764	♠ AJ64	Now you need around 33 combined points to make a small slam in a suit when you have a fit. Opener has promised about 13+ and so both of these hands are worth slam.
♥ AQ1086	♥ AK543	Simplest is just to bid 6♥ with both of these.
♦ K7	♦ K873	
♣ A5	♣ -	

So that's all quite straightforward. If opener supports our suit then we take charge, by either passing, inviting or bidding game or looking for slam. Incidentally, I selected hands 5 & 6 carefully as they do not require to know how many aces partner has, slam is a good prospect whatever. You can establish how many aces partner has by bidding Blackwood (4NT) and I will cover that later.

Summary. When partner opens and you respond in a new suit (a major in our examples), both hands are unlimited. When partner simply supports your suit then that bid is not forcing (about 12-15 points). It is up to you to make the next move. Pass with a minimum (about 6-10), invite (3♥ in our examples) with an invitational hand (about 10-12) and bid game with more (good 12+).

Next week we'll look at what to do when opener has introduced a 3rd suit.

Obey The Law!Board 17 from Friday 27th, love all.

I've said it many times - compete to the total number of trumps.

Dealer:	♠ K62		West	North	East	South
North	♥ AJ643					
Love all	♦ Q74		-	pass	pass	pass
	♣ 64		1♣	1♥	2♣ (1)	2♥
			3♣ (2)	pass	pass	3♥ (3)
♠ A94	N	♠ Q108	4♣ (4)	pass	pass	pass
♥ 9	W E	♥ 1085				
♦ KJ103	S	♦ A86				
♣ KJ852		♣ Q1097	4♣ went 1 off for a poor score to E-W, so who bid one too many? Let's look: -			
	♠ J753					
	♥ KQ72					
	♦ 952		(2) The 2♣ bid at (1) would normally be 4 card support and so			
	♣ A3		3♣ here is fine.			
			(3) With 4 trumps South can happily compete to the 3 level.			
			(4) But this is one too many.			

East has only promised 4 ♣'s and so West's 4♣ bid is too much according to The Law. And what happened? 4♣ was bid at two tables and went minus one at both. West should be content with pushing N-S up to the 3 level (3♥ does not make).

A 5-3 fit or 3NT?Board 15 from Friday 5th, N-S vul

North (C)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ K1096	♠ 7	-	-	-	1♥
♥ K54	♥ AQ1093	pass	1♠ (1)	pass	2♦ (2)
♦ 107	♦ A5432	pass	2NT (3)	pass	3♦ (4)
♣ KQJ7	♣ A2	pass	3NT	all pass	

First, what can we say about the bidding? 1♠ at (1) is correct even if playing 5 card majors, do not support partner's 1♥ opening with 3 cards if you have 4 ♠'s – a possible 4-4 ♠ fit is preferable to a 5-3 ♥ fit. 2♦ at (2) is obvious. 2NT at (3) is not wrong but it is non-forcing and this is a lovely 12 count, I would bid 3NT. 3♦ at (4) accepts the game invitation and shows 5-5. So should West then bid 4♥ or 3NT? Close. South is known to have just 3 cards in the black suits, but I agree with the 3NT bid – North has ♣'s well stopped and the contract is played from the correct hand (the one with the ♠ tenace). You are very unlikely to get a ♦ lead on the bidding and a ♣ or ♠ lead will not hurt. Well bid Norman/Dave.

And what happened? 3NT was bid at just one other table and either made +1 or +2 for the two top scores. 4♥ was bid the other 3 times and made 10 tricks exactly on every occasion for the joint bottom. It looks like 4♥ should make +1 (5 ♥'s, 4 ♣'s, ♦A and a ♦ ruff) but East can over-ruff the 3rd ♦.

The bottom lines. I said just last week that 3NT is sometimes preferable to 4♥/♠ with a 5-3 fit. Think about 3NT if you have the outside suits well stopped. Also, if it's a close decision (as this one) think about who is declarer and the opening lead. This North hand should try to be declarer with this ♠K.

1♠ or slam?

Dealer: ♠ 742
East ♥ AQJ7
N-S vul ♦ 8532
♣ A3

♠ 105 N ♠ AKQJ9
♥ - W E ♥ K8652
♦ K10974 S ♦ AJ
♣ K98642 ♣ 10
♠ 863
♥ 10943
♦ Q6
♣ QJ75

Table A:

West (D)	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	pass
pass (1)	pass		

Board 2 from Friday 5th, N-S vul.

Yes, this really did happen on Friday.

Table B:

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	pass
2♣ (2)	pass	3♥ (3)	pass
3NT (4)	pass	4NT (5)	pass
5♣	pass	5NT (6)	pass
6♥	dbl (7)	pass	pass
6♠ (8)	dbl (9)	all pass	

Table C:

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	pass
1NT	pass	2♥ (9)	pass
2♠	pass	4♠	pass
pass	pass		

So then, three entirely different auctions! Which do you think is sensible? Let's see: -

Table A: Nothing on earth could bring me to pass 1♠ with this hand. It does not have the values for a two level response but 1NT is the correct bid at (1), especially if you play 2/1. You do not need a balanced hand for the 1NT response over partner's 1♥/♠ opening – it is sometimes a 'courtesy' bid when you have a few points but cannot support partner and have insufficient values for a two level bid (11 points). If you pass with 6 points then you may well miss game (or slam?!) if partner has a strong hand.

Table B: This West took a rather more optimistic view! Clearly not enough for a two level bid (playing a strong NT you need 11+), but he mistakenly thought that he could not bid 1NT at (2) with a void! The rest of the auction was amusing, East was obviously going slamming once partner had promised 11+ points! 3♥ at (3) is sensible if partner is likely to pass 2♥. I don't really like 3NT at (4), I would bid 3♠. Nobody really knew what 4NT at (5) was (it should be natural – quantitative; the ace ask (Gerber) is 5♣ over a 3NT bid). Anyway, West was not sure and indicated his dearth of aces. 5NT at (6) can only really be asking for kings and there we are in the slam zone. Now obviously a few wheels had come off here, and if North had had the wit to pass (let it be) then East would have had no reason to suppose that West preferred ♠'s and may well have passed 6♥! However, would you fail to double a slam holding AQJ7 in trumps and another ace? Be honest now. Anyway, West finally gave preference at the 6 level (8) and the slam rolled home thanks to the fortunate ♦Q position.

Table C: A sensible auction at last. Although 3♥ at (9) is an excellent alternative.

The bottom lines. Don't pass partner's opening with 6 points. A 1NT response to a 1♥/♠ opening may be *any* shape (6-10 pts). Know what bid asks for aces. It's usually best to agree trumps before Blackwood. Don't be too quick to double if opponents are in a silly contract and can run into a better one. Supporting partner is usually better than bidding NT - so 3♠ at (4).

Responding to Partner's 1♥/♠ Opening

Obviously, after the last hand, a few words on the 1NT response to an opening 1♥/♠ are in order. Playing Standard American (or any strong NT system) you need a good 10+ or 11 points to respond with a new suit at the two level. When partner is inconsiderate enough to open 1♥/♠ this does not leave much bidding space and often an off-beat 1NT is the only option (just one reason why I don't like to play 4 cards majors, especially with a strong NT). So, 1NT over partner's 1♥/♠ opening could be just about anything; consider the following, partner has opened 1♠ in all cases and we are playing Standard American: -

Hand 7	Hand 8	Hand 9	Hand 10	Hand 11	Hand D
♠ 92	♠ 92	♠ -	♠ 64	♠ K4	♠ 105
♥ KJ8732	♥ KJ8	♥ QJ982	♥ AKJ8	♥ AKJ83	♥ -
♦ 6	♦ Q965	♦ K872	♦ AJ63	♦ AJ63	♦ K10974
♣ QJ65	♣ Q963	♣ Q653	♣ Q54	♣ K6	♣ K98642

Hand 7: Bid 1NT. If partner rebids 2♣ then pass. If partner rebids 2♦ then bid 2♥ - this shows a weak hand with long ♥'s. If partner rebids 2♥ then think about a 4♥ game! If partner bids 2♠ then he has a 6 card suit and so passing 2♠ is fine. Of course if partner's rebid is pass then that may not work out too well – one good reason for playing a forcing NT here – more of this later.

Hand 8: Bid 1NT. This is the opposite side of the coin. You have a genuine NT shape and would not mind if partner passed your 1NT bid.

Hand 9: Bid 1NT and pass a 2♣/♦ rebid from partner. If partner rebids 2♥ then game may be there, invite with 3♥. If partner rebids 2♠ he has a 6 card suit so it's not too bad.

Hand 10: Now here you have game (and possibly slam), too strong for 1NT. So you bid 2♦. There is no need to jump, 2♦ is forcing. And you cannot bid 2♥ as that promises a 5 card suit.

Hand 11: 2♥. Here you can bid 2♥ as you have a 5 card suit. Slam is definitely a possibility, but it could be in any strain, that's why I would not jump to 3♥ - it takes up unnecessary bidding space and it is by no means certain that ♥'s is going to be the final contract.

Hand D: So now you know enough to realise that 1NT is the bid with this hand!

Now as the 1NT response can be virtually any shape, even with singletons/voids, it would sometimes be very difficult to play in 1NT if opener passes. This is just one of the reasons why the superior 2/1 system has a forcing 1NT here – opener cannot pass.

A Word about the weak NT

I have repeatedly said that you need 11 points to respond with a new suit at the two level. But if you play a weak NT it is different – 8 points are sufficient. This is probably the main advantage of playing a weak NT – you do not have to respond with a distorted 1NT quite so often and can tell partner what you really have.

Take our 'problem' Hand D for example. As I said, 2♣ is way over the top playing Standard American; but playing a weak NT then I would stretch and bid 2♣ over partner's 1♠ opening. And Hands 7 & 9 are simpler, you can bid 2♥.

Overcall or double first?

Board 10 from Friday 5th, both vul.

Dealer:	♠ J	West (K)	North	East	South (F)
East	♥ 953				
both vul	♦ AKJ10873	-	-	1♠ (1)	dbl (2)
	♣ 42	2♠ (3)	3♦ (4)	3♠ (5)	dbl (6)
		pass	4♦ (7)	pass	pass (8)
		pass			
♠ Q10975	N	♠ A8642			
♥ 108	W E	♥ Q4			
♦ Q94	S	♦ -			
♣ 1083		♣ KQ9765			
	♠ K3				
	♥ AKJ763				
	♦ 652				
	♣ AJ				

I have a lot to say about this bidding (as always?). In fact every player made at least one bid that I do not particularly care for (what's new?), so let's have a look: -

- (1) When 5-5 in the black suits it is debatable if you should open 1♣ or 1♠. When 5-6 then 1♣ is surely best, especially as this ♠ suit is rather poor. Having said that, opening 1♠ worked quite well here.
- (2) So, double (with the intention of bidding ♥'s next go) or simply overcall 2♥? A nice hand, but overcalling 2♥ is probably enough although I would not criticise the double too much. But bear in mind that a two level overcall, vulnerable, shows values for an opening hand +.
- (3) There's only one 'real' bid here - 4♠! Obey The Law. A 4♠ bid here certainly would make it difficult for South to show his ♥'s!
- (4) After West has bid, North does not have to. So 3♦ here is a free bid and shows values.
- (5) It looks like opponents have game, maybe slam, in ♦'s or ♥'s, perhaps 4♠ is the bid here?
- (6) This is the problem with doubling instead of overcalling initially (and it should have been a lot worse if East or West had gone to 4♠). Anyway, they did not and so South is off the hook. He doubled initially with the intention of bidding ♥'s later. Unfortunately he is now up at the 4 level (or you could say fortunately – it could have been the 5 level), but partner has shown values and 4♥ is the bid now. Double here shows extras and leaves it up to partner. Unfortunately it says nothing about this great ♥ suit!
- (7) It's obviously correct not to defend, but partner has shown extras and 5♦ (even 6♦?) is certainly worth considering. Surely a near solid 7 card suit is worth more of a noise?
- (8) Either 4♥ or 5♦ are worth considering here. I would bid 4♥, but then I would have last go.

And what happened? 4♦ made +2 for a poor score. One N-S pair were allowed to play in 4♥ making +3! All the other E-W pairs sacrificed correctly in 4♠ or 5♠. I guess that 6♦ or 6♥ are difficult to reach - but quite possible if South had bid 4♥ at (5) or if North had made more of an effort. But 4♥, 5♦ or 5♥ should certainly be reached. Should North be looking for 6♦ after partner's strong bidding? Possibly, 6♦ is an excellent contract - 6♥ may catch a Lightner double and thus a ♦ lead? But then South may run to 6NT and what can E-W do about that? (It even makes an overtrick on a non ♠ lead). As I said, some interesting hands on Friday.

The bottom lines. A simple overcall is often best in preference to a double – especially if the opponents compete. If your RHO doubles, then make life difficult for them and support partner pre-emptively to the limit of The Law (so 4♠ at (3) in this case). If you think that your hand is good enough to double and then bid your suit, then follow that plan through! A near solid 7 card suit with a singleton in opponent's suit is worth more than a squeak.

Worth a raise?

Dealer: ♠ K5
East ♥ K1073
Both vul ♦ AK865
♣ 108

♠ A87	N	♠ Q32
♥ AQ42	W E	♥ 65
♦ J	S	♦ 72
♣ KJ963		♣ AQ7542
	♠ J10964	
	♥ J98	
	♦ Q10943	
	♣ -	

So, two very different evaluations of their support by the three South's. There are number of interesting points in this bidding: -

Board 10 from Monday 1st, both vul.

Table A:

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

Table B:

West	North	East	South
-	-	pass	pass
1♣ (5)	1♦ (6)	2♣	pass (7)
3♣	pass	pass	pass

Table C:

West	North	East	South
-	-	pass	pass
1♣ (5)	1♦ (6)	3♣ (8)	pass (9)
3♥	pass	pass (10)	pass

- (1) How many times must I say that opening 1NT with a singleton is not allowed? What's wrong with the obvious 1♣?
- (2) Natural.
- (3) Nice shape and intermediates, so definitely worth a raise. But to the 5 level?
- (4) There is a saying in Bridge, bid your hand just once. This West has already made a distorted bid of 1NT, but at least his partner now knows that he has 15-17 points. So why on earth double with a singleton trump and 5(!) card support for partner's suit. Two terrible bids.
- (5) The obvious opening.
- (6) The 1♦ overcall is best here. Double would work out badly if partner bids ♠'s.
- (7) Apparently this player had been taught that you need 6 points to support partner. Perhaps, but you have to adjust for number of trumps, shape and intermediates etc. There is a case for 2♠, 2♦, 3♦, 4♦, or 5♦; but not pass!
- (8) Another reasonable option, showing 10-12 points in support of ♣'s.
- (9) Again, supporting partner's ♦'s is in order.
- (10) I've seen a silly pass like this before (Well excuse me for bidding my hand – news sheet 39). Presumably this East thought as Ian did then – *'I've already bid my hand – it's up to you if you want to bid again – I'm not going to'*? Really silly of course. West has a good hand and 3♥ here is natural and a game try – quite reasonable. East should, of course, bid 4♣.

So what is the 'correct' bid at (3) or (7) or (9)? 4♦ looks about right to me, but some people think that 4 of a minor is for children. OK. I certainly would not argue with the 5♦ found by Bob/Michael, but pass, 2♦ or 3♦ are all too feeble for me.

And what happened? 5♦ doubled made, +750, a top. 3♥ went 3 off, so -300 for a poor score. All the other tables were in reasonable contracts (either 4♦ by N-S or 3♣ or 5♣ by E-W).

A 2NT opener or what? – part 1

Board 12 from Friday 5th, N-S vul.

North (J)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ K72	♠ 862	pass	2♣ (1)	pass	2♦
♥ AKQ	♥ J9763	pass	3NT (2)	pass	pass (3)
♦ AKJ	♦ 7	pass			
♣ KQ72	♣ J864				

3NT is not the best contract (4♥ is),
but how should the bidding go?

- (1) How do you bid a balanced 25 point hand? Some bid 2♣ followed by 3NT, others simply open 3NT. Before I go into what is most definitely (in my opinion) the best method, let's just have another look at this North hand. I said 25 points, but is it? No! I keep on saying it, deduct a point for 4333 type shape. Also, AKQ and AKJ in 3 card suits are not worth 9 or 8 points resp. etc. So this hand is really only a poor 23-24 points. The correct bid is 2♣ followed by 2NT at (2).
- (3) South is in a bit of a bind now. To transfer (4♦) at (3) could work out best (it would on this occasion), but not always. The answer is that this sequence 2♣ - 2♦ - 3NT is silly as it inhibits the use of Stayman and transfers below 3NT. Far better to use Benjamin twos so that 2♦ - 2♥(relay) - 2NT shows 25+ and is game forcing. Then you can use Stayman/transfers at the safe level below 3NT.

And what happened? 3NT made +1 on all of the 4 occasions it was bid. Only Dave/Norman bid to the excellent 4♥ making +1, and they don't even play transfers!

A 2NT opener or what? – part 2

Board 4 from Friday 5th, both vul.

West (H)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ A7	♠ KJ10982	2NT (1)	pass	3♥ (2)	pass
♥ K8	♥ A105	3♠	pass	6♠ (3)	all pass
♦ KQ2	♦ A108				
♣ AKQ984	♣ J				

6♠ is not the best contract (7NT is, and 6NT ain't bad),
but how should the bidding go?

- (1) How do you bid a semi-balanced 21 point hand? Obviously open 2NT, which is what everybody (I think) opened on Friday. So obvious? You've guessed it – I disagree! Just look at that West hand. If you think that this ♣AKQ984 is worth 9 points (the same as the ♥AKQ nothing of the previous hand), then you simply do not understand Bridge – read up on hand evaluation. This is *not* a 21 point hand! It's more like 24. So open 2♣ followed by 2NT.
- (2) If West opens correctly then East, with a good 6 card suit and a hand bristling with intermediates should probably bid the grand. Opposite a mere 2NT opener then 6♠ is probably correct; playing RKCB I would try Blackwood at (3) and bid 7NT or 7♠ only over a 2 key cards + ♠Q response. You just have to agree which bid is RKCB at (3)! 4NT?

What happened? 6♠ scored poorly. 6NT was reached twice. Only Dave/Norman bid to the excellent 7NT. However, their bidding (2NT - 4♣ - 4♠ - 5♣ - 5NT - 7NT) is far too optimistic for me. The East hand is only worth a small slam if West opens just 2NT unless he has ♠Q.

The bottom lines (for both of the above hands). AKQxxx is good, AKQ in a 3 card suit is not. If you think that they are both 9 points then you need to read up on hand evaluation. Play Benjamin twos - the 3NT opener (either directly or via 2♣) with 25+ points sucks. Piglets

Good enough for slam? – part 1

Board 17 from Monday 1st, love all

North	South (A)	West	North	East	South
♠ K1075	♠ A862	-	1♣	pass	2♦ (1)
♥ 8	♥ AK65	pass	2♠	pass	3NT (2)
♦ J7	♦ A543	pass	pass	pass	
♣ AKJ862	♣ 5				

I've mentioned this a few times before, a jump shift response shows a good long suit. Obviously this ♦ suit complies with neither, a simple 1♦ response is called for at (1). And what about 3NT at (2)? Really silly with a known 4-4 ♠ fit.

So how should the bidding go? How about 1♣ - 1♦ - 1♠ - 4♠ - pass.

South has (maybe just about) the values to look for a ♠ slam at his 2nd turn, but I would not because (a) a singleton in partner's 1st bid suit is not usually good, and (b) this ♠ suit is really not slam quality. So settling for 4♠ is the best bid.

And what happened? The sensible 4♠ contract was reached at just two tables for a good score. Two tables overbid (to 5♠ and 6♠ and both went down). The silly 3NT was reached at two tables; one made exactly for a poor score, one managed 3 overtricks! Presumably the semi-psyched 2♦ bid confused the defence?

The bottom lines. Look for the 4-4 fit. Axxx or Kxxx are usually not good enough suits to look for slam with just a 4-4 fit unless you know that partner has a good suit. A singleton in partner's first bid suit is not good. The jump suit response shows a *good long* suit.

Good enough for slam? – part 2

Board 3 from Friday 5th, E-W vul.

North (G)	South (E)	West	North	East	South
♠ AKQ4	♠ 762	-	-	-	1♦ (1)
♥ 8743	♥ AQ106	pass	1♥ (2)	pass	2♥
♦ 65	♦ KQJ9	pass	4NT (3)	pass	5♦
♣ AK6	♣ 93	pass	6♥	all pass	

The slam was hopeless. Anybody to blame or just unlucky? Let's see: -

- (1) Just 12 points, so do you open? Yes! The shape is reasonable and with all the points and good intermediates in the long suits, this is a very sound opener.
- (2) Obviously you bid 1♥ (and not 1♠) I hope. Never deny a 4 card major (even 8743).
- (3) Blackwood. Did you go slamming with Hand G in this weeks quiz? I hope not! This hand (especially with the miserable trumps and small doubleton in partner's first suit) is nowhere near good enough to look for slam. 4♥ is the correct bid.

And what happened? Even with one of the club's top declarer players at the helm, the contract went two off. Even 4♥ went one off at another table – I can't imagine how! One North subsided in a pathetic 3♠ (two off – do not deny a 4 card major! – got that Mike/Philip?). And there is always one pair who cannot find the 4-4 fit and land in an inferior 3NT (it's no excuse if you make +2, eh John/John?). Am I right or am I right, John?

The bottom lines. As I said above, Axxx or Kxxx are not usually good enough to look for slam in a 4-4 fit. xxx is nowhere near! xx is not a good holding in partner's 1st bid suit. You generally need 31++ points for a slam when you have a fit, 16 opposite a minimum hand is not enough. And zero points in partner's two suits is a big BIG minus!

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: 1♦ (or 1♥ if that is your style). Do not jump to 2♦ (or 2♥) as that bid promises a better, longer suit.
- Hand B: 4♦ (or 5♦ perhaps, depending upon how good a declarer partner is?). Anything else, especially pass, is rather pathetic. I would not mention this ♠ suit as you already have a fit and you don't really want ♠'s led if you end up defending.
- Hand C: 3NT or 4♥. The ♥ Kxx are excellent, and with good intermediates this hand is worth game. I think that 2NT or 3♥ are underbids. So, 3NT or 4♥? Perhaps a matter of style with a 5-3 fit. 4♥ is certainly not wrong but I would bid 3NT as you have the black suits well stopped and it may be necessary to protect the ♠K from the opening lead.
- Hand D: 1NT. A process of elimination. You cannot pass with 6 points and you need 11 (or a good 10) points to bid a new suit at the two level. The 1NT response to a 1♥/♠ opening is 6-10 points and may be *any* shape. This is a good hand if you play 2/1 as 1NT would then be forcing - you don't really want to be left in 1NT with a void and you will always find a 5/6-3 minor suit fit or the 5-2 ♠ fit.
- Hand E: Open 1♦. With two good suits and good intermediates it's well worth an opener.
- Hand F: 2♥. You could double and then bid ♥'s later, showing a hand too strong for a simple overcall, but I'm not convinced that this hand is that good. 2♥ looks fine to me (and is simpler, especially if there is competition).
- Hand G: 4♥. This hand has 16 points and a fit for partner. Often enough for slam, but not with these pathetic trumps. Partner's minimal rebid promises no more than about 12-15 points (and it could be just 3 card ♥ support!). 4NT is a *gross* overbid. Now you could find out if partner is maximum by means of a game try (I explained this in news sheet 5) but I would not even bother. Even if partner is max with 4 ♥'s this ♥ suit is too pathetic to look to slam for me. A small doubleton in partner's 1st suit is also an ill omen, a ♦ honour would improve this hand (but not by enough).
- Hand H: 2♣, followed by 2NT, showing a (semi) balanced 23-24 (or 22-24). A 2NT opener is 20-22 (or 20-21 in the modern style). This hand is worth far more. If you opened 2NT (and most of our players did) – including a few of our top players, then perhaps you should read up on hand evaluation? There's a whole appendix in the 2003 yearbook, I'll lend it to you if you don't have your own copy.
- Hand J: 2♣, followed by 2NT. This is a miserable 25 pts. With it's totally flat shape and top honours in the short red suits, downgrade to a (poor) 23-24 pts.
- Hand K: 4♠. When RHO doubles it's best to play jumps to 3♠ and 4♠ as pre-emptive. Partner has 5 trumps, so with 5 card support bid what The Law dictates - 4♠. With only 4 ♠'s then a pre-emptive 3♠ would be in order. If you have a stronger hand which warrants a genuine raise to 3♠ or 4♠, then you bid 2NT first. The 2NT bid in this situation is conventional (good raise of partner's suit) as with a genuine 2NT bid you would redouble.

Summary of Friday

As I said earlier, Friday's hands were very interesting. 7 out of the 10 pairs scored less than 50%. Every one of our leading players made a number of bidding mistakes – except me, that is. Now of course some members may not consider me a 'leading player' – but then I am not included in the statistics as I did not play! I am, however, indisputably our leading kibitzer – just call me Oscar. Nobody is better at telling you what you should have done after the event!

♣ ♦

Club News Sheet – No. 72

12/3/2004

♥ ♠

Last week's winners: Monday 8/3/04

Friday 12/3/04

1st Alex/Jeff 69%

1st Chuck/Terry 58%

2nd John G/John 60%

2nd Dave/Norman 58%

Bidding Quiz

Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.

Hand A Hand B With Hand A partner opens 1♠. You respond 2♣ and partner rebids 2♦. What is your bid now?

♠ Q3 ♠ K102
♥ J42 ♥ Q54
♦ AK3 ♦ J92
♣ AKQ85 ♣ Q932

With Hand B partner opens 1NT, what is your bid?

Hand C Hand D With Hand C partner opens 1♠, what is your response?

♠ A1063 ♠ 54
♥ KJ5 ♥ Q9
♦ 532 ♦ K107653
♣ Q53 ♣ AKQ

With Hand D you open 1♦ and partner responds 1♠. You rebid 2♦ (or perhaps 2♣ if you really want to for some strange reason). Anyway, partner rebids 2♠, what do you do?

About Bulls and China Shops

Board 23 from Monday 8th, both vul

North (A)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ Q3	♠ AKJ94	-	-	-	1♠
♥ J42	♥ 9	pass	2♣	pass	2♦
♦ AK3	♦ QJ1042	pass	6NT (1)	pass	pass
♣ AKQ85	♣ J7	pass			

What can we say? A totally ludicrous contract with 5 ♥ losers off the top. And you certainly can't blame South. So what should North bid at (1)? He needs to know more about South's hand before just charging in like a bull in a china shop, any contract could be correct; the solution is 4th suit forcing. So 2♥ at (1). South's primary duty after the 4th suit is to show a stop (bid 2NT). Without a stop here South bids 3♦ which shows 5 ♦'s and denies a ♥ stop. Hopefully 6♦ or 6♠ or 6♣ is then reached and a silly 6NT contract avoided. It really is not good enough for an experienced player to say '*well you should have a ♥ stop as you must have points somewhere*'. Also, of course, ♥ is the problem suit and South may hold something like ♥ K73. This is a certain stop only if South is declarer and invoking the 4th suit is the way to ensure this, you can be pretty certain of a ♥ lead on the bidding.

♠ AK1094 Now I know that some of you might be saying 'I don't remember that hand'.
♥ KQ7 Well, actually, I lied. The South hand above is what North deserved to see
♦ Q642 appearing on the table. In actual fact South held this hand and 6NT made easily
♣ 2 when the ♦'s split 3-3. No justice, eh? Is 6NT a candidate for worst bid of the year?
It would be a front runner if 6NT lost the deserved 5 ♥ tricks off the top.

The Beginner's Page

Responder's 2nd bid cont.

Last week we covered when opener supported our suit, so now we'll look at what to do if partner introduces a new suit.

Let's suppose that partner has opened 1♥, we responded 1♠, and partner then bids 2♦. Partner has shown us that he has two suits, but what we need to know is, is partner weak, strong, or in-between? How strong is a 2♦ rebid (and what about a 3♦ rebid)?

Let's consider these three sequences: -

(a) 1♥ - 1♠ - 2♦ and (b) 1♥ - 1♠ - 3♦ and (c) 1♥ - 1♠ - 4♦

Now first of all, sequence (c). This uses up bushels of bidding space and goes past 3NT. It really is of no importance as a natural bid and we shall ignore it. Thus we only have two bidding sequences for 3 hand types. The generally accepted approach is that we use sequence (a) for both weak and in-between hands. The 2♦ bid is not forcing but responder will only pass if he is very weak (say 5-7 pts) and definitely prefers ♦'s to ♥'s.

Thus sequence (b) is for strong hands and in Standard American it is game forcing.

So responder knows a lot about opener's hand. He knows two suits and also has some indication about strength. With Hands 1-6 partner has opened 1♥, we bid 1♠ and partner rebid 2♦. What is your second bid? :-

Hand 1	Hand 2	With Hand 1 you should bid 2♥. Partner is not interested in your ♣ suit and so you have to choose which of his suits you prefer. With equal length, always put him back into his first bid suit. Do <i>not</i> bid 2NT, that shows 11-12 points
♠ A754	♠ A754	With Hand 2 you definitely prefer ♦'s. You are minimum and it's best simply to pass.
♥ 94	♥ 74	
♦ 87	♦ Q872	
♣ Q9852	♣ 9852	
Hand 3	Hand 4	With Hand 3 you just love ♦'s. You are non-min for the initial 1♠ bid and so you have sufficient values to show your mild enthusiasm with a 3♦ bid.
♠ A752	♠ AJ10752	Hand 4 is a total mis-fit. You don't like either of his suits but fortunately there is a way out. Bid 2♠. This shows a weak hand with long ♠'s and partner should pass. Do <i>not</i> bid 2NT.
♥ 7	♥ 9	
♦ KJ987	♦ 7	
♣ J52	♣ Q9852	
Hand 5	Hand 6	With Hand 5 you don't like partner's suits and have both of the unbid suits stopped. So 2NT? No, No, NO. That shows 11 points and mis-fits do not play well in NT. Bid 2♥.
♠ AJ54	♠ A984	Hand 6 is interesting. Many players would pass as they prefer ♦'s to ♥'s. This is incorrect. Partner may have up to about 16 points and game may just be there. Bid 2♥, it's not quite enough for 2NT. Partner has 5 ♥'s and if it turns out that he is minimum
♥ 97	♥ Q7	then he will pass and no harm is done. On good day he will bid on and 4♥ or 3NT may be reached. Partner knows that you may have only 2 ♥'s (you did not support first time).
♦ 87	♦ K74	
♣ KJ765	♣ J985	

Raise 1NT to 2NT? – Part 1Board 19 from Monday^{8th}, N-S vul.

I keep on saying the same things week after week, and I guess I'll have to keep at it as long as 4 out of 7 pairs get it wrong? Devalue flat hands!

West	East (B)	West	North	East	South
♠ A73	♠ K102	-	-	pass	pass
♥ KJ63	♥ Q54	1NT (1)	pass	2NT (2)	pass
♦ A73	♦ J92	pass (3)	pass		
♣ A65	♣ Q932				

- (1) 16 points. But totally flat so deduct a point. Then that's 15, but the hand is totally devoid of intermediates. I certainly would not argue if you devalued further and decided to open 1♣ (rebid 1NT over 1♠ from partner, 12-14 points). However, a 1NT opening (15-17) is just about OK.
- (2) Totally flat again, but this time with a few intermediates. Now you need 8-9 points to raise a strong NT to 2NT. This flat hand is only worth 7, so pass.

What happened? The hand was played 7 times and 3 pairs managed to stop in a 'safe' 1NT (one did manage to go down in just 1NT). 2NT was reached twice and 3NT reached twice – all went down. The only E-W + scores were two pairs who stopped in 1NT.

The bottom lines. Two flat hands totalling 24 points do not make 3NT – this hand made just 6 tricks twice, 7 tricks three times and 8 tricks twice. Think I've said that before, cucumber sandwiches? Deduct a point for totally flat (4333 type) shape. If partner does invite with 2NT then you need a *good* 16 or 17 to accept, this West hand is nowhere near and correctly passed 2NT at (3); unfortunately they were already too high.

Raise 1NT to 2NT? – Part 2

Board 1 from Monday^{8th}, love all

West	East
♠ QJ3	♠ 1096
♥ A853	♥ K63
♦ 872	♦ K1094
♣ 865	♣ AKQ

<u>Table A</u>			
West	North	East	South
-	pass	1NT (1)	2♦
2NT (2)	pass	pass	pass

<u>Table B</u>			
West	North	East	South
-	pass	1NT	2♦
2♥ (3)	pass	2♠ (4)	all pass

Table A: (1) A flat (4333) hand yet again. So deducting a point makes it just 14. But then the two 109 combinations are a very good + and so a 1NT opening is in acceptable.

(2) A flat 7 count, so certainly not worth a raise. But after the opponents compete? – Even more reason not to bid 2NT – opponents have a long suit. West should simply pass.

Table B: (3) As I said, I would pass. But this West decided to compete with his 4 card ♥ suit. West meant this as 2♥ bid as natural ...

(4) ... but East thought it was a transfer.

And what happened? Apart from the 2♠ misunderstanding, 4 of the 7 pairs bid too high (2NT or 3NT). 1NT making scored the top. 2♦ by South would have gone two off for a top to E-W. The bottom lines. If you do not have a sound raise to 2NT, don't let the opponents bully you into bidding it. If opponents compete then be wary – they have a long suit against your NT contract. If the opponents compete over your 1NT opening then you have to agree if transfers are still on. See *systems-on, systems-off* last week.

Benjamin Twos Anyone?

I said just last week how Benjamin twos enable you to show your big balanced hands below the level of 3NT. Now that, actually, is not the only advantage of Benjamin twos. They also enable you to show strong hands (particularly a major suited hand) without the fear of a one level opening being passed out. At least, that's how they should work

Now the concept of Benjamin (or strong) twos is playing tricks. When we come on to cover two of Monday's hands we shall see that not everybody completely understands the concept of playing tricks. Luckily enough, I wrote a booklet on Hand evaluation and Playing Tricks a year or two back and I think it's time to reproduce the section on playing tricks: -

Playing Tricks

For most of this book, we use the 4-3-2-1 Milton Work hand evaluation as defined previously. There are other good methods (such as losing trick count) but the 4-3-2-1 method is universally accepted and is simple. For two sections in this book, however, we do refer to the concept of playing tricks. The sections concerned are strong opening 2 bids and pre-empts.

Playing tricks are tricks that you reasonably expect to make if you are playing the contract, and are different from defensive tricks. For the purpose of evaluating playing tricks, we assume that our long suit(s) break fairly evenly between the other 3 hands. Now many players are confused by the concept of playing tricks. For example, a nine playing trick hand does not mean a hand that will make 9 tricks opposite a completely bust partner. The playing trick philosophy assumes reasonable breaks around the table in both points and distribution. A trivial example: -

♠ 64 ♥ AKQJ1052 ♦ 64 ♣ J7	Obviously both of these hands have only 7 guaranteed tricks, but it really would be a little too pessimistic to treat the 2 nd as the same as the 1 st . Kings and Queens are worth something.
♠ K4 ♥ AKQJ1052 ♦ Q4 ♣ KJ	

So, the generally accepted philosophy is that Kx is ½ a playing trick, AQ(x) is 1½ etc.

♠ K4 ♥ AQJ752 ♦ 64 ♣ AQ7	This hand contains 7½ playing tricks. 5½ in ♥'s, 1½ in ♣'s and ½ in ♠'s.
--------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------

When our long suit is not solid or semi-solid, the estimation of playing tricks is more tricky. This suit is worth about 3½ playing tricks. With normal distribution, it may make either 3 or 4.

♥ KJ8652

Now this concept of playing tricks has been around for eons, and is very useful for evaluating strong opening bids and also for pre-emptive bids. There is, however, one important point that is generally overlooked. It's spelled out on the next page.

3.1.1 The Problem with Playing Tricks

Now way back in the Hand Evaluation section we studied playing tricks. The concept has been around for decades and that is how we evaluate our strong two openings (and has been since the birth of Bridge). In the next section we will be studying responder's reply to a strong two and how he should evaluate his hand. Now I would not be so pretentious (pretentious – Moi ?) as to suggest that the whole concept of playing tricks and opening twos is in error, but there is one major point that needs considering.

I have not mentioned this earlier, but there is a flaw in the playing trick calculation! Take the simple example AQx. This is defined as 1½ playing tricks as the Q stands a 50% chance of making. Actually, this is incorrect. A more realistic figure is 66% as it makes if RHO or partner holds the K (or if LHO leads the suit). Kx is equally undervalued at ½, it is really much better if partner has values. These flaws are easily demonstrated by considering the following suit: -

AQx opposite Kxxx

This is defined as 2 playing tricks (1½ opposite ½). In reality, it is of course 3 (or even 4!).

So what is to be done? We are not going to adjust the requirements for a strong opening two bid, but responder does need to look carefully at his cards. In the next section, I say something like 'reasonably expect to make a trick' and it is responder who should take this under valuation of playing tricks (when partner has something) into account. A holding such as Kx should be considered as a *more than* reasonable expectation of a trick, so should the Q of trumps.

Remember when we said that ♥ KJ8652 may make either 3 or 4 tricks and should be evaluated as 3½? If partner holds just ♥ Q3 the expectation suddenly springs to 5! (but if partner is void then the expectation is somewhat less).

So should we re-evaluate our criteria for a strong two? No - it is best to leave it all up to responder as he knows that opener has values and can readjust. Opener cannot do this as even the current calculation may be optimistic if partner is bust. We need to get to dummy to take our 50% finesse and our AQx is probably only one trick if dummy has no entry. Our 'adjustments' are only valid if both parties have some values, and only responder knows that.

3.1.2 Strong Twos forcing for one round?

In traditional Acol, a strong two is forcing for one round (with 2NT as a negative). This is also the case with the more modern Benjamin Acol System which has strong 2♥/♠ (via 2♣).

Now this hand is clearly rather an extreme example,
♠ 42 ♥ 32 ♦ 65432 ♣ J632 but you would consider yourself lucky if partner's 2♠ bid was not doubled, and surely it would be lunacy to bid?

There may be a better spot (unlikely), but equally well you may just be adding another hundred or so to the opponent's score or inviting a double. If game is a prospect opposite this heap partner would have opened 2♦ playing Benjamin Twos, which is forcing to game.

So let's use our common sense. As I indicated in the previous section, responder should upgrade any assets that he has; but zero is zero. As little as a king, the queen of trumps or even just 3 or 4 trumps is enough but we can only stretch so far.

These last two pages were something I wrote a few years back. It's a shame that the N-S players of the following two deals had not read them! ...

A Jump to 3♠ after a Benjamin 2♣?

Board 16 from Monday^{8th}, E-W vul.

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ AK107652	♠ 4	pass	2♣ (1)	pass	2♦ (2)
♥ -	♥ K432	pass	3♠ (3)	pass	4♠ (4)
♦ AQ	♦ K954	pass	5♦ (5)	pass	6♠ (6)
♣ KQ85	♣ 9642	pass	pass	pass	

6♠ was hopeless. 4♠ is a good contract (but not 100%), let's see what went wrong: -

- (1) Strong and artificial, but not game forcing.
- (2) Relay.
- (3) 9 playing tricks with ♠'s as trumps. First of all, I do like to play this variation of Benjamin, but it is not universally played – you have to agree it. Many play that a 2♠ rebid here is either 8 or 9 playing tricks and is forcing (as with the traditional Acol Two).
This hand is just about good enough for the 3♠ bid. It is about 9 playing tricks (6½ in ♠'s, 1½ in ♦'s and 1 in ♣'s).
- (4) Partner has said that he can make 9 tricks on his own. South needs very little to raise to game and this is certainly enough. 4♠ is correct here.
- (5) A cue bid, looking for slam. In my view North has stated his hand exactly; South has promised virtually nothing and this is way over the top.
- (6) South thought that his ♦K was good enough for slam. It did not really matter as the bidding is way too high anyway.

A Straightforward Benjamin Two

Board 17 from Monday^{8th}, love all.

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ AKQ986	♠ 10	-	2♣ (1)	pass	2♦ (2)
♥ K32	♥ AJ10765	pass	2♠ (3)	pass	pass (4)
♦ 3	♦ Q6	pass			
♣ AK7	♣ 8432				

Oops; yes, the very next board, 13 tricks were made. Let's see what went wrong this time: -

- (1) Strong and artificial, but not game forcing.
- (2) Relay. Some players would prefer a 2♥ response here, but I personally prefer the 2♦ relay and wait to see what type of strong hand partner has.
- (3) 8½ playing tricks, so this is the correct bid.
- (4) Partner has promised a strong hand where he can make 8 tricks on his own. South needs very little to press on to game and cannot pass with a hand this good. Even if playing that 2♠ promises less than 9 playing tricks an ace is usually enough for game. This may seem difficult to understand; it's 'the problem with playing tricks'. This hand must bid.

So how should the bidding go? I would bid 3♥ at (4) and North then has an easy 4♥. And what happened? Every other table bid 4♠ except one who bid the optimistic 6♠. 12 tricks were there when ♠'s split 3-3. and the ♥Q was doubleton. Nobody found the far superior 4♥ contract! Why not? Playing Standard American how about 1♠ - 1NT - 3♠ - 4♥ - pass ?

The bottom lines – for both of the previous deals.

- Don't overvalue big hands.
- Re-read the previous playing trick section if you play Benjamin (or Strong) twos.
- A Benjamin 2♥/♠ after 2♣ is strong and virtually forcing – only pass with a real heap.
- Responder to a Benjamin (or strong) two should take a very optimistic view of any assets that he has and bid with a reasonable expectation of making a trick.

Candidate(s) for Worst Bid of the Year?

Board 5 from Monday^{8th}, N-S vul.

Enough of talking about dubious bids. Let's get on to the serious stuff; here we have two candidates for the worst bid of the year – and they are on the same board!!

Dealer:	♠ K108654	West	North	East	South
North	♥ 6				
N-S vul	♦ Q83	-	pass (1)	pass	4♥ (2)
	♣ K92	5♣ (3)	pass	pass (4)	dbl
		pass	pass	pass	
♠ AJ7	N	♠ Q932			
♥ 10	W E	♥ KQJ98			
♦ AK42	S	♦ 7			
♣ QJ1075		♣ 864			
	♠ -				
	♥ A75432				
	♦ J10965				
	♣ A3				

- (1) I would open 2♠. But N-S had had a bad session so far and perhaps North thought that his partner would require a better hand for a vulnerable pre-empt? You see the humour of this remark when you see South's bid!
- (2) What can we say about this bid? I don't really want to take up the rest of the page, so I'll restrict it to a few lines. Just a six card suit with one honour and no intermediates, vulnerable (against not) ... I'm sure that even the beginnerest of beginners will realise that this is absolutely appalling? And what was South's 'excuse'? He had a back up 'suit' to run to. 4♥ should, of course, go for a number (in fact, 1700 numbers). My personal opinion is that just because you have had a bad session, there's really no need to spoil it for other people by making a grotesque semi-psyche bid.
- (3) It really is sad to see South get away with such an atrocious bid! Why on earth West thinks that he can make 11 tricks in ♣'s opposite a passed partner when South has shown a strong hand (4♥, vulnerable, should be a good hand!) is beyond me. Either double or pass (and pass partner's double when it comes) are so obvious that this 5♣ bid competes with the 4♥ opening for lunacy. No, I take that back – it's even worse.
- (4) I felt sick (and nearly threw up when partner subsequently turned up with the ♥ 10).

What happened? Unfortunately the scoring is such that I could not award both West and South the zero score that they both asked for, and so N-S got a totally undeserved top. Obviously 4♥ (or 5♦) doubled by South would have been a cold bottom against a sane West, but the nobody has ever accused jef of being sane. Perhaps I can arrange for South and West to partner each other some time in the future?

The bottom lines. An opening 4♥/♠ is a good 8 card suit, and especially good with unfavourable vulnerability. A double of such a 4 level opening shows values. It is not take-out but partner may possibly pull with an unsuitable hand. As it happens West was an experienced player (I know it's difficult to believe), but with a large number of beginners and less experienced players in the club I do not approve of psyches (or semi-psyches) by experienced players. Will the more experienced players please bear in mind the general standard of the club and refrain from making really silly bids.

A 6-2 major suit fit is fine.Board 10 from Monday^{8th}, both vul.

West	East (D)	West	North	East	South
♠ KJ10986	♠ 54	-	-	1♦	pass
♥ 843	♥ Q9	1♠	pass	2♣ (1)	pass
♦ 2	♦ K107653	2♠	pass	2NT (2)	pass
♣ K74	♣ AKQ	pass	pass		

- (1) I don't really see the need to dig up a non-existent suit here, what wrong with 2♦?
 (2) Partner has promised a 6 card ♠ suit and pass is the bid here.

What happened? A mixed bag of results, with E-W going off in just about everything that they bid. There was just one +ve entry in the E-W column. Another pair bid and made 2♠!

The bottom line. When partner re-bids a suit and you have reasonable support (a doubleton) then feel happy that you were not dealt a singleton or void! Pass as quickly as ethically allowed!

Support partner or 1NT?Board 13 from Monday^{8th}, both vul.

North (C)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ A1063	♠ KJ975	-	pass	pass	1♠
♥ KJ5	♥ Q	pass	1NT (1)	pass	3♣
♦ 532	♦ AK4	pass	4♠	pass	pass
♣ Q53	♣ KJ98	pass			

- (1) North thought that he had a problem here. I believe that his thoughts were *'I'm a bit too good for 2♠ but not good enough for 3♠ - so I'll temporise with 1NT which is more encouraging than 2♠'*. Unfortunately, this is totally muddled thinking and incorrect. First of all, 1NT is not more encouraging; in fact both 1NT and 2♠ show the same point range (6-10) but supporting partner is more encouraging as it promises support (as I pointed out in detail last week, 1NT may be any shape). I went over this (direct support being more encouraging) in some detail in news-sheet 50. Anyway, that's all rather irrelevant here, with 4 card support you *always* support rather than bid 1NT. And there is no 'gap' between the 2♠ or 3♠ bid. 2♠ is 6-10, 3♠ is 10(+)-12, but with 10 you have to judge which way to go. This hand has decent trumps, but with the totally flat shape (so no ruffing potential or side suit to set up) the correct bid is 2♠. This is true if you play 4 card or 5 card majors.
- (2) Luckily South had a good hand and did not pass 1NT.

And what happened? 4♠ made and scored just above average as a couple of pairs somehow failed to bid game. The simplest bidding to get to the correct contract is 1♠ - 2♠ - 4♠ - pass. And just a word about the play. Obviously 4♠ is cold (you discard a losing ♦ from the South hand on a ♥), but how do you play the ♠'s? If you 'find' the ♠Q it's an overtrick. Remember '8 ever nine never'? You should play for the drop - but it doesn't hurt to lead the ♠J from the South hand - some Wests will always 'cover an honour with an honour'!

The bottom line. Support with support.

When the 4-4 Fit is not best

Board 13 from Friday 12th, both vul

Now the 4-4 major suit fit is usually best, but there are always exceptions: -

Dealer:	♠ J9	West	North	East	South
North	♥ A862	-	1♦	2♣	dbl (1)
Both vul	♦ AKQ86	pass (2)	2♥	pass	4♠ (3)
	♣ J4	pass	pass	pass	

♠ K5	N	♠ A	(1) Negative, showing both majors.
♥ 109	W E	♥ KQ4	(2) I would jump to 4♣ (The Law), but then I expect that South is always bidding 4♠?
♦ J1072	S	♦ 9543	(3) So then. You have a 4-4 ♥ fit, but play in the fit or is this 8 card suit better as trumps? Especially as this South hand is so weak (in high cards) and has very poor ♥'s, it must be best to play in ♠'s and 4♠ is worth a shot.
♣ Q8653		♣ AK972	
	♠ Q10876432		
	♥ J753		
	♦ -		
	♣ 10		

And what happened? 4♠ made 11 tricks for a good score. It was beaten by the pair in 4♠ doubled (this East hand should not double 4♠). One E-W pair got an excellent score for sacrificing in 5♣ (500 away but a virtual top). This was only beaten when one N-S played in 4♥ and went two down. The bottom line. The 4-4 fit is usually best, but if the suit is very poor then there may be a better spot. An 8 card suit usually makes a good trump suit.

What is a 3 level opening in 4th seat?

Board 9 from Friday 5th, E-W vul.

Dealer:	♠ 874	West	North	East	South
North	♥ AJ875	(Mike)			
E-W vul	♦ KJ743				
	♣ -	-	pass	pass	pass
		3♣	3♥	pass	pass
		pass			
♠ A109	N				
♥ 109	W E				
♦ 82	S				
♣ AKQ965					

3♥ went one down. Mike(Can) was chuckling at the result. North (name withheld upon request) was not amused. He was also not amused when Mike told everybody how well he had done! Actually he didn't do that well, honours were even as 3♥ minus one scored exactly average and 4♣ made or made +1 at other tables. The top result for N-S was 3♦ making, but how does North know whether to bid ♦'s or ♥'s?

But seriously, what does 3♣ mean in 4th seat? Obviously it is not an outright pre-empt (you can simply pass the hand out if you think it's not your hand). It's not defined (as far as I know) but I think that 3♣/♦ should be something along the lines of an Acol opening 3NT – a long solid minor with a smattering of bits elsewhere – inviting partner to bid 3NT with a few bits and pieces (as opposed to a gambling 3NT which promises nothing outside). I would prefer a 7 card suit and I would open 1♣ with this hand, although I feel that 3♣ is not as unreasonable as our un-named North (it was Chuck of course) says!

When Partner Pauses and Passes!

Board 11 from Friday 12th, love all.

It's a statistic. The Director is called more times over problems involving a player thinking for a long time, passing, and his partner subsequently bidding on, than for any other reason.

Dealer:	♠ Q8	West	North	East	South
South	♥ AK10963				
Love all	♦ 953	-	-	-	1♣
	♣ Q6	pass	1♥	1NT (1)	2♣
		2♠	3♥ (2)	pass	pass (3)
♠ KJ542	N	3♠ (4)	4♥ (5)	pass	pass
♥ Q	W E	4♠	dbl	pass	pass
♦ 7642	S	pass			
♣ 953					
	♠ 97		(1) A Sandwich NT. Showing ♠'s and ♦'s?		
	♥ J2		(2) Invitational		
	♦ KQJ				
	♣ AJ10742				

- (3) Something to think about for sure. Is this hand good enough for 4♥? It's close. After a long pause South decided to pass.
- (4) Now obviously West could (should?) simply pass, but he took a view (hoping that partner had a slightly more shapely hand!).
- (5) Here's the problem. North considered this hand only invitational last bid, so why is it now worth game? Because partner paused?? As I said, this type of problem causes more controversy than any other at the Bridge table. After South's pause, North has to pass.

Anyway, West noted the infraction and would have called the Director if he himself was not the Director! And what happened? E-W went two down, so -300. But this was a 2nd top for E-W as every other table but one played in 4♥ scoring anything from 420 to 590. Now I did tell North what I thought and he replied that of course he is always going to bid game as his partner opened. That is inconsistent with his previous non-forcing 3♥ bid!

The bottom lines. If partner makes a long pause and then passes then he has conveyed unauthorised information (that he has something to think about!). You are not allowed to take advantage of this. Now you are not barred from bidding in this situation, but if you do choose to bid then it must be a very obvious bid - one that at least 75% of your peers would make in a similar situation. If you do indeed have something to think about (as South in this case), then if you have made a noticeable pause it's usually best to bid (not pass) and thus avoid controversy.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: 2♥. 4th suit forcing. You have no idea what the best final denomination or contract is. 6NT is likely, but only if partner has a ♥ stop. Bid the 4th suit to find out! Also, if partner has something like ♥ Kx, then it's imperative that he is declarer in 6NT; 4th suit forcing ensures that.
- Hand B: Pass. This is a miserable flat hand. Deduct a point for the totally (4333 type) shape and it's only 7 points, so pass.
- Hand C: 2♠. Not good enough for 3♠ (too flat!).
- Hand D: Pass. You should feel lucky that you have found a 6-2 fit. 2NT is a very poor bid.

Last week's winners: Monday 15/3/04

Friday 19/3/04

N-S 1 st Phil/Michael	57 %	E-W 1 st Laine/Sirkkala	55 %	1 st Norman/Dave	61 %
N-S 2 nd John/John	56 %	E-W 2 nd Sid/Don	54 %	2 nd = Phil/Michael	56 %
				2 nd = Phillis/Chris	56 %

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

Hand A Hand B

♠ KJ109532	♠ KQ5
♥ 863	♥ KJ6
♦ K8	♦ QJ43
♣ 8	♣ 542

With Hand A both sides are vulnerable. RHO opens 1♥, what do you bid?

What do you open with Hand B? And if you play a weak NT?

Hand C Hand D

♠ J9854	♠ Q7
♥ AK	♥ KQ
♦ J10832	♦ QJ63
♣ 7	♣ QJ976

With Hand C RHO opens 1NT, what is your bid?

With Hand D both sides are vulnerable. LHO opens 1♥ and partner bids 3♠ (7 card suit, pre-emptive). RHO passes, what is your bid?

The Two-level response.Board 20 from Friday ^{19th}, both vul.

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ AJ96	♠ 32	1♥ (1)	pass	2♦ (2)	pass
♥ A1096	♥ J5	2♠ (3)	pass	3♦	pass
♦ KJ	♦ Q1098742	6NT	pass	pass	pass
♣ AJ9	♣ K2				

It was a bold effort, but 6NT went one down, so anybody to blame?, let's look at the bidding: -

- (1) Playing Acol, so a 4 card major (1♥) is the correct bid with this hand.
- (2) Now here's the problem. How many points do you need for a new suit at the two level? I've said over and over again that it's 11 (or a good 10), but that's when you play a strong NT. Playing Acol it's different and 8 (or a good 7) is quite sufficient (I've gone into why a few times in past news-sheets). Anyway, 8 is enough and I think it's reasonable to up-grade with a seven card suit.
- (3) A reverse, so forcing. Normally it promises longer ♥'s than ♠'s but West was in control - I guess he was always going to bid 6NT?

Obviously West was at fault, but to be fair he is used to playing a strong NT or Precision and did not realize that partner only promised 8 (or so) points with a 2-level response.

The bottom line. The strength of your opening NT has repercussions elsewhere.

In particular, a new suit at the two level is 10-11+ playing a strong NT system but 7-8+ playing a weak NT. I mentioned this difference last week.

The Beginner's Page

I have covered responder's bids when partner opens one of a suit in the past few articles. Time now to consider what to do when partner opens 1NT.

Up to now, we have only dealt with natural bids, it's time to discover our first conventional bid. There are thousands of conventional bids around, and the most common are undoubtedly Blackwood (asking for aces) and Stayman and Jacoby transfers (the latter two used when partner opens 1NT). This week we'll deal with Stayman

The first thing to remember when partner opens 1NT is that he has a balanced hand. Balanced hands usually play well in NT and NT scores more than a minor suit. In all of our examples, partner had opened 1NT (15-17).

Now when partner opens 1NT we know how many points he has (15-17) and it is up to us to stop now, invite game or bid game. We need 8-9 points to invite game and a good 9+ points is usually enough to bid game without inviting.

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	
♠ 1095	♠ 1095	♠ K105	All of these hands are fairly balanced and we have no reason to think of anything other than NT as a final strain. So with hand 1 we pass; with Hand 2 we invite with 2NT and with Hand 3 we bid 3NT. Note that even a 5 card ♣ or ♦ suit is not worth mentioning, NT scores more.
♥ 976	♥ Q76	♥ QJ8	
♦ J9	♦ KJ942	♦ KJ942	
♣ KJ942	♣ Q9	♣ KJ	

Stayman

Fine, a minor suit is usually not even worth mentioning; but major suit(s) are different! There is only 10 points difference between the scores for a NT contract and a ♥/♠ contract and if there is a major suit fit (4-4, 5-3 or better) then you usually get more tricks by playing in the major.

Hand 4	Hand 5	
♠ J87	♠ Q76	Partner has again opened 1NT. Hand 4 is worth a game invitation and Hand 5 is worth game. But in NT or is there a 4-4 ♥ fit? If we respond 2♥, how does opener know if that is a 4 or 5 card suit? Now I said above that we don't bother to mention a ♣ or ♦ suit, so the 2♣/♦ bids are spare. We use the 2♣ bid for the Stayman Convention. It says 'I have a 4 card major (possibly two 4 card majors) and I want to find out if we have a fit. It is totally artificial and says nothing about the ♣ suit
♥ Q1095	♥ A1095	
♦ KJ92	♦ KJ92	
♣ Q9	♣ J9	

With both Hand 4 and 5 we bid Stayman 2♣. The responses to Stayman by opener are: -

- 2♦ = I have no 4 card major
- 2♥ = I have 4 ♥'s (and also possibly 4 ♠'s)
- 2♠ = I have 4 ♠'s but do not have 4 ♥'s.

So with Hand 4 we bid 2♣ Stayman. If partner replies 2♦ (no major) or 2♠ (4 ♠'s but not 4 ♥'s) then we bid 2NT – showing our 8-9 points and invitational to 3NT. If partner bids 2♥ then we invite the 4♥ game by bidding 3♥. Hand 5 is worth game but we still start with Stayman. Over 2♦/♠ we bid 3NT and over 2♥ we bid 4♥. One final point; since partner must respond to 2♣ we may have to play in 2NT and so 2♣ guarantees invitational values +. There are exceptions, but for now let's say Stayman guarantees 8 or more points.

A 4♦ Opening? – part 1

Board 2 from Monday 15th, N-S vul.

Last week I covered a couple of strong (Benjamin) twos; and I also said that one requirement for a strong two is that it has 8 (or 9) playing tricks. But one point that I apparently failed to mention is that a strong two has to be strong!

Dealer:	♠ AK954	West	North	East	South (B)
East	♥ 876				
N-S vul	♦ 42	-	-	pass (1)	2♦ (2)
	♣ 1065	dbl	2♠	pass (3)	3♦
		pass	5♦	pass	pass
		pass			
♠ QJ107	N	♠ 863			
♥ AKQJ	W E	♥ 932			
♦ J8	S	♦ Q			
♣ 974		♣ AKQJ82			
	♠ 2				
	♥ 1054				
	♦ AK1097653				
	♣ 3				

- (1) I would open 1♣. But I guess that pass is not unreasonable for a conservative player??
- (2) Explained by North to be a strong two in ♦'s.
- (3) I would bid 3♣.

E-W took their four tricks off the top for a poor score to N-S. South then criticised North's bidding saying that he had only promised 8 tricks with ♦'s as trumps, was his rebuke justified? No! South was clearly to blame. The problem is that a strong two should be a *strong* hand, one where you would feel sick if a 1 level opening was passed out. As I said last week, it should contain 8 playing tricks, but it also needs to have a decent point count, 16 is probably about the minimum.

This South hand is not even good enough for a 1♦ opening! So what do you open? I suppose that pass is reasonable but I would open with a pre-empt. An 8 card suit, so too good for a weak 2♦; that leaves 3♦ or 4♦. Many players say that with 7 cards open 3 and with 8 cards open 4. That is often good advice in a major, but the problem with opening 4 of a minor is that it goes past 3NT which may be the best contract if partner has a decent hand. I prefer to play opening bids of 4♣/♦ as Texas transfers and I would open 3♦ with this hand. 5♦ is not totally unreasonable; but, again, it goes past 3NT.

A Defensive Problem

Board 18 from Friday 19th, N-S vul.

N	♠ 86	West	North	East	South
W E	♥ 762				
S	♦ AKJ98732	-	-	4♦	pass
	♣ -	pass	4♥	5♦	5♥
		pass	pass	pass	

♠ AJ2

♥ J3

♦ 105

♣ K76542

Don't worry about the bidding for now (I go into it on the next page). You are East, defending 5♥. You lead ♦A and both West and North follow small. What card do you lead to trick two? Answer next page.

A 4♦ Opening? – part 2

Board 18 from Friday 19th, N-S vul.

Dealer:	♠ K7	West	North	East	South
East	♥ AKQ84				
N-S vul	♦ Q6	-	-	4♦ (1)	pass
	♣ AQ83	pass	4♥ (2)	5♦ (3)	5♥ (4)
		pass	pass	pass	
♠ Q109543	N	♠ 86			
♥ 1095	W E	♥ 762			
♦ 4	S	♦ AKJ98732			
♣ J109		♣ -			
	♠ AJ2				
	♥ J3				
	♦ 105				
	♣ K76542				

- (1) An 8 card suit, so open 4♦? That's what a lot of players would do, and it's not wrong. I, however, am not so keen on it as it goes past 3NT, which may well be the best contract if partner has a decent hand. On this occasion, however, partner had a heap and 4♦ could have worked out well, making it difficult for the opposition.
- (2) It's difficult at the 4 level, but North got this one right for this particular deal (it's a bit of a lottery, double may work out best on another lay-out).
- (3) Now I do not like this bid. You have made the opponent's guess at the 4 level and they may well have got it wrong. Partner may even be waiting with the axe. I am not going to go into whether this hand is worth 5♦ or not, but if you feel that it is worth 5♦, then bid 5♦ at (1)! Pre-empting twice is silly – it gives the opponents time to exchange information and upsets partner if he could set the opponents.
- (4) Indeed, once partner bid 4♥ then South finds the fine 5♥ bid. The extra round of bidding makes all the difference!

And what happened? Needless to say that West did not find the defence of ruffing partner's ♦K at trick two and returning a ♣. However, East may possibly have seen the light? He knows that somebody is ruffing the 2nd ♦ and a Lavinthal lead of the 2♦ at trick two is unlikely to cost and would have worked wonders! However, East was not the likes of Hans or Chuck (or maybe me on a good day?) – did you lead ♦2 when I set the question overleaf? If East had a ♠ void instead of a ♣ void, then ♦J (or ♦9) would be the card. Anyway, back to the real world

I'm not saying that I would open 5♦, but it would have worked here. North cannot possibly step in at the 5 level and would have doubled. 5♦ went minus 3 at two other tables for a good score against the 650 for 5♥.

The bottom line. Pre-empt just once, to the limit which the hand, vulnerability, your style etc dictates. If you think that the 5 level is a good bet then open five, do not raise your pre-empt later. Never bid again having pre-empted unless partner invites. Think in the defence, don't just automatically bang out aces and kings. If you want a ruff, you have to get partner to take the lead. Lavinthal (McKenny) tells partner which suit to return.

Quacks

Board 7 from Monday ^{15th}, both vul.

West (A)	East (D)	West	North	East	South
♠ KJ109532	♠ Q7	-	-	-	1♥
♥ 863	♥ KQ	3♠ (1)	pass	4♠	pass
♦ K8	♦ QJ63	pass	dbl	pass	pass
♣ 8	♣ QJ976	pass			

(1) Weak

N-S took their four aces and -200 was a poor score for E-W. So, was West's 3♠ overcall too much vulnerable or was East's raise too optimistic?

Perhaps a matter of style, but I think 3♠ is fine. The problem is the East hand. Now queens and jacks (quacks) are good cards in partner's suit, and sometimes in a NT contract; but when partner has advertised a decent 7 card suit, quacks in other suits are virtually worthless. East should pass.

And what happened? West's 3♠ bid had done its job. 3♠ making would have been an excellent score and if the opponents pushed on to 4♥ then that went down.

The bottom line? Quack, quack.

Go to Jail, ... do not pass Go.

Board 8 from Friday ^{19th}, love all

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ 1052	♠ Q3	1♦	pass	1♠	dbl (1)
♥ K109	♥ AJ76	2♠	3♥ (2)	pass	pass
♦ KQJ10	♦ 53	dbl	pass	pass	pass
♣ J95	♣ A10863				

3♥ doubled was minus two for a cold bottom on a partscore deal, anyone to blame? As always, let's look at the bidding: -

- (1) Now some people believe that you need an opening hand for a double – that is incorrect (although this hand is probably worth an opener). A take-out double shows values in the unbid suits, so ♣'s and ♥'s in this case. This hand is ideal. What's more, my personal opinion is that majors are more important than minors – if this South hand held 5♥'s then I would prefer an overcall of 2♥ non-vul (you probably need a six card suit for a two level overcall if vulnerable). Thus this double implies exactly 4♥'s, fine.
- (2) So, 10 points and decent ♥ support, so bid 3♥? No, this is totally wrong. Partner has probably got only 4♥'s and this goes over the 'safe' level of 7 tricks by two – too many. Points are largely irrelevant here and this is a good defensive hand. Pass.

And what happened? 2♠ either made (twice) or went down (twice) at other tables.

The bottom line. I keep saying it – obey The Law. The fact that North has a decent 10 count and partner has doubled are largely irrelevant in any decision to bid – the over-riding factor is the total combined number of trumps. Do not bid more than one level over the combined number of trumps in competitive situations where the points are roughly even between the two partnerships. North got what he deserved. Obey The Law or face the consequences.

Passed Out?

Board 6 from Friday^{19th}, E-W vul.

West East (B)

♠ 1063 ♠ KQ5
♥ Q4 ♥ KJ6
♦ A987 ♦ QJ43
♣ KJ97 ♣ 542

Table A:

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

Table B:

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

Table C:

West	North	East	South
-	-	pass (6)	pass
pass	pass		

Table A: So then, did you open with Hand B in this week's quiz? At table A East opened a weak NT at (1) - I'll give my opinion of this opening later. But is this West hand worth 2NT? It has good intermediates but 2NT here would be 11-12 points and it's not quite worth it, I agree with the pass at (2).

Table B: This pair played a strong NT and East elected to open with 1♦ at (3). So what should West respond at (4)? It's close. 1NT is 6-9 and a new suit (2♣) is 11+. With 10 you have to decide which way to go. Obviously if your partner opens on rubbish like this East hand then you should settle for 1NT! 3NT at (5) is an overbid of course.

Table C: I've let the cat out of the bag! This East most certainly got this right at (6) in my opinion. The East hand is not worth an opener! How many times must I say that totally flat hands (4333 type) are bad and should deduct a point?

Actually, before I saw the complete deal one distinguished member did thrust this East hand under my nose and ask 'would you open?' I said no, I would pass. Chuck nodded in approval.

And what happened? It was passed out twice but four pairs found a poor opening bid. 1NT went minus one, 2♦ was minus 2 and the silly 3NT (bid twice!) was minus 4!!

The bottom line. I'll just keep on playing the same old record – deduct a point for totally flat hands. This deal is *just another* example of how badly flat hands play – minus four in 3NT!! Even a combined 22 points fails to make 7 tricks! This hand is not worth any sort of opener, either 1♦ or a weak NT – pass.

Double! Take-out or penalties?

Board 3 from Friday 19th, E-W vul

Dealer:	♠ K10762	West (C)	North	East	South
South	♥ 82		(me)		(Ian)
E-W vul	♦ 97	-	-	-	1NT
	♣ A1095	2♠ (1)	dbl (2)	pass	3♥ (3)
		pass	pass	dbl	pass
		pass	pass (4)		
♠ J9854	N	♠ -			
♥ AK	W E	♥ Q10963			
♦ J10832	S	♦ K54			
♣ 7		♣ Q6432			
	♠ AQ3				
	♥ J743				
	♦ AQ6				
	♣ KJ8				

This was not a success for N-S (5 losers in the trump suit!), what went wrong?

- (1) I have no idea if this was natural (or ♠'s and a minor). Either way it's an appalling overcall of a strong NT – vulnerable, with two suits headed by jacks. A candidate for worst bid of the year? – No, South can do far better!
- (2) 1000% Penalties. No if's, but's, or maybe's about it.
- (3) South does not even have to look at his hand again. He has opened 1NT and partner has doubled for penalties. That's it.
- (4) Since North simply wanted to throw all 13 of his cards at his partner, you can hardly blame him for passing here? It's no longer possible to take the hand seriously.

And what happened. One down for a bottom. And the other tables? 4♠ made +1 once, but by N-S! If my arithmetic is correct (it usually is) then that would translate into 6 down and 1700 to N-S? I shall be enrolling both West and South into my next beginner's class. Funny thing is that they both consider themselves way above the beginner stage! It really is sad to see the opposition offering these *enormous* penalties week after week and then have partner make a ludicrous bid and go down! It's ridiculous; you can hardly call it bridge.

Now South said that he plays all doubles below 2NT as take-out. Total garbage of course, and this particular South did in fact ask me a year or more ago to write up what doubles are penalties. I obliged (news-sheet 17 and various subsequent ones). Shame he failed to read them?

The bottom line. After partner's 1NT opening has been overcalled double is 100% for penalties and it's best to play that all other bids are natural (except a bid of opponent's suit which is Stayman). More advanced players may wish to read up on Lebensohl.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: I would bid 3♠, weak. This is an excellent suit for a pre-empt (texture).
- Hand B: Pass. This is a miserable flat hand. Deduct a point for the flat (4333 type) shape and it's only 11 points, so pass. Open a hand like this and you will get too high.
- Hand C: Pass. You need a decent hand to come in over a strong NT, this shape is fine if the points were in the long suits, but not with just 2 points in the two long suits. I would still pass even playing a system like Multi Landy or Cappelletti where a 2♠ bid promises ♠'s and a minor.
- Hand D: Pass. Partner has a reasonable pre-empt because he is vulnerable, but this hand is not good enough to raise. It has too many quick losers. Queens and jacks in outside suits are virtually useless in this scenario.



Last week's winners: Monday 22/3/04

Friday 26/3/04

1st Harry/Marlies 66%
2nd Chuck/Einar 65%

1st Chuck/Terry 64%
2nd Hans/Jan 60%

I added them up, we have no less than 5 pairs playing 4 card majors this Monday (and that's with Dave/Norman absent). So, a few comments on 4 card majors this week and a couple in the bidding quiz.

Bidding Quiz

Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.

Hand A Hand B

♠ 86 ♠ J92
♥ A872 ♥ AK76
♦ KQ764 ♦ AQ
♣ K9 ♣ A753

For Hands A & B you are playing 4 card majors. With Hand A you are also playing a strong NT so what do you open?

You are again playing 4 card majors with Hand B

- (a) What do you open?
- (b) What is your rebid when partner responds 1♠?

Hand C Hand D

♠ 86 ♠ AQ732
♥ A7 ♥ KJ64
♦ AKQ7642 ♦ -
♣ K9 ♣ 8754

Back to Standard American. With Hand C you open 1♦ and partner responds 1♠, what is your rebid?

With Hand D partner opens 1♦

- (a) What do you respond?
- (b) If you decided upon 1♠, then what do you do after partner's 1NT rebid?

Hand E Hand F

♠ K63 ♠ K106
♥ 765 ♥ AJ842
♦ 73 ♦ K
♣ K5432 ♣ AKQJ

With hand E partner opens 1♠, what do you do?

What do you open with Hand F?

Hand G Hand H

♠ AQ763 ♠ K5
♥ Q108 ♥ K96
♦ A8742 ♦ QJ95
♣ - ♣ QJ75

With hand G LHO opens 1♠ which is passed round to you, what do you bid?

With Hand H RHO opens 1♠, what do you do?

Hand J Hand K

♠ J985 ♠ Q8
♥ AQ10 ♥ AQ
♦ AQJ ♦ K762
♣ AJ10 ♣ KJ874

What do you open with hand J?

- (a) What do you open with Hand K?
- (b) Suppose that you open 1♣, then what is your rebid after partner responds 1♥ (or 1♠)?

The Beginner's Page

Stayman when you have both majors

I started on the Stayman convention last week, let's have a few more examples. First of all, let's consider the situation when responder has two 4 card majors: -

Hand 6	Hand 7	Partner has again opened 1NT. Hand 6 is worth a game invitation and Hand 7 is worth game. But in NT or is there a 4-4 major suit fit? So we know now to bid 2♣, Stayman.
♠ KJ92	♠ KJ92	It's easy then. If partner responds 2♥ or 2♠ we invite with 3 of the major with hand 6 and bid 4 of the major with Hand 7.
♥ Q1095	♥ A1095	
♦ J87	♦ Q76	
♣ Q9	♣ J9	If partner responds 2♦ then we bid an invitational 2NT with hand 6 and bid 3NT with Hand 7.

So, both majors is simple. But what if opener has both majors and partner bids Stayman?

Hand 8	Hand 9	You open 1NT with both of these hands and partner bids 2♣. With both majors you always respond 2♥, regardless of which suit is 'better'. So you bid 2♥ and partner bids 2NT, invitational. What do you do now? Hand 8 is minimal and you do not want to be in game, so pass? No! Partner's 2♣ Stayman bid promises a 4 card major, he did not like ♥'s and so he must have 4 ♠'s, so bid 3♠. With Hand 9 the same logic applies, since you want to accept the game invitation, bid 4♠ (not 3NT).
♠ AQ92	♠ AQ92	
♥ Q1095	♥ A1095	
♦ KJ7	♦ KJ7	
♣ K9	♣ K9	

Let's consider these same hands 8 & 9 some more. we opened 1NT, partner bid Stayman, we bid 2♥ but this time partner jumps to 3NT. What do you do? Partner has said that we have sufficient values for game, so pass? No! If partner simply wanted to play in 3NT he would not have bid Stayman. Since he started with 2♣ and then bid 3NT over our 2♥ response he has game going values with a 4 card ♠ suit. We must convert to 4♠ with both of these hands.

One more twist. It starts off the same but this time partner bids 4NT after our 2♥ response. What is this? We will cover Blackwood later, but this bid is not Blackwood, it is natural (quantitative). It is a slam invitation and we should bid slam with Hand 9 but not with Hand 8. So what do we do with Hand 8? Pass or 5♠ would both be reasonable and I'm sure that either would get lots of votes; but what do you bid with Hand 9? 6♠! This is not a 'new suit at the 6 level'! partner had promised a 4 card ♠ suit and 6♠ is usually better than 6NT when you have a good 4-4 fit and no points to spare.

Remember, the 2♣ Stayman bid *promises* at least one 4 card major.

Next week... what to do with a 5 card major.

Responding with 5 ♠'s and 4 ♥'s.Board 25 from Monday 22nd, E-W vul.

North (A)	South (D)	West	North	East	South
♠ 86	♠ AQ732	-	1♦ (1)	pass	1♠ (2)
♥ A872	♥ KJ64	pass	1NT	pass	2♥ (3)
♦ KQ764	♦ -	pass	3♥	pass	4♥
♣ K9	♣ 8754	pass	pass	pass	

A very sensible contract that was reached at nearly every table, so what's so interesting about the bidding? First of all, N-S were playing 4 card majors (and a strong NT), so should North open 1♦ or 1♥? 1♦ is correct, I go into the opening bid when playing 4 card majors later in detail. And what should South respond when 5-4 in the majors? This hand is easy but what would you do with a few points less? If you bid 1♠, partner rebids 1NT and you pass then you may miss a 4-4 ♥ fit. If you try 1♥ and partner rebids 1NT and you pass then you may miss a 5-3 ♠ fit. The solution is that you should always respond 1♠ and if partner rebids 1NT then 2♥ shows 5-4 but is a weak bid! This South hand (in my opinion) is too strong for this sequence. Now 1♠ is clearly correct at (2), so what is the correct bid at (3)?

So what should South bid at (3) with this invitational hand if 2♥ is weak? The answer is to play Checkback (or new minor forcing - NMF). In this example 2♣ at (3) shows invitational values (or better) and asks opener to clarify his major suit holdings. Opener should bid 2♥ with 4 ♥'s, 2♠ with 3 ♠'s but not 4 ♥'s and 2♦ with neither (2NT with neither but max).

And if you play Checkback (or NMF) what does 3♥ at (3) mean? Since all invitational and forcing auctions when 5-4 can go via 2♣, it's best to play 3♥ as 5-5 in the majors (invitational). And what happened? 4♥ was bid 6 times. It made exactly 4 times but went down twice.

A 1NT opener?Board 7 from Friday 26th, both vul.

North	South (K)	West	North (Chuck)	East	South (me)
♠ J7	♠ Q8				
♥ J6542	♥ AQ	-	-	-	1NT
♦ AQ8	♦ K762	pass	2♦	pass	2♥
♣ 652	♣ KJ874	pass	pass	pass	

Well then, did you open 1NT with hand K in this week's quiz? Generally speaking it's not a good idea with two doubletons, but there are always exceptions. I think that it's sometimes OK if the long suits are minors and the two doubletons are not weak (Qx or better). The point is that if you open 1♣ then you have no sensible rebid if partner responds in a major (very likely). If the minor suits were reversed you could open 1♦ and rebid 2♣, but here you would have to rebid a 5 card ♣ suit and so I like the 1NT opener. A reverse into 2♦ is a possibility but I would prefer a stronger hand.

And what happened? 2♥ made +1 for a top as at other tables the opponents were making 9 or 10 tricks in ♠'s. Note that the strong 1NT opening makes it less easy for the opponents to compete with their shovels (vulnerable at the two level).

The bottom line. You don't have to agree with me about a 1NT opening with this hand; but whenever you have to make an opening bid, think about your rebid. If it's going to be difficult then remember that you don't need a rebid if you open 1NT!

The Number of pages etc

This week's issue is rather large. That's because there were a number of interesting hands, but also I got stuck into an article on 4 card majors. I used to keep a few deals 'in reserve', but I think it's best to print an article when it's still relatively fresh in people's minds.

I do listen to what people say: Jan commented that it's nice to have an even number of pages – with the answers to the bidding quiz on the last page. He finds the quiz so much easier when you can spread out the news-sheet so that the questions and answers are both visible!

Also, I read a lot (of Bridge magazines, books etc) and I really hate it when you get a diagram with the commentary overleaf. I spent a lot of time shuffling the articles around. How did they manage in the days of typewriters? Anyway, this was just a space filler as the next article was less than a page: -

When an opponent bids your suit...

Board 14 from Friday 26th, love all

Dealer: ♠ AQ763
 East ♥ Q108
 Love all ♦ A8742
 ♣ -

Table A:

West	North (G)	East	South (H)
-	-	1♠	pass (1)
pass	pass (2)		

♠ 10 N ♠ J9842
 ♥ 532 W E ♥ AJ74
 ♦ K103 S ♦ 6
 ♣ 1086432 ♣ AK9

Table B:

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	dbl (3)
pass	pass (4)	pass (5)	

♠ K5
 ♥ K96
 ♦ QJ95
 ♣ QJ75

Table C

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	pass_
pass	dbl (6)	pass	3♦
pass	4♦	all pass	

Table A: I like this bidding by N-S (well I have to, Chuck and I were N-S!). First of all, what did you bid with Hand H in this weeks quiz? Double at (1) is not totally unreasonable but you know me, I prefer to have 4 ♥'s for a double of 1♠. And what did you bid with Hand G in the quiz? 2♦, or perhaps double at (2)? Again, I don't like to double with only 3 ♥'s and if you do double, what would you do after partner's highly likely 2♣ bid? (2♦ after doubling initially would promise a much stronger hand). With this ♠ suit I would prefer to defend rather than bid ♦'s at the two level.

Table B: Here South chose to double at (3) and North's pass at (4) (thus converting into penalties) is reasonable. However, if I was East I would not stand it with this anaemic ♠ suit and would redouble (SOS) at (5) with a view to playing in ♣'s or ♥'s.

Table C: As I said, I prefer to pass at (6). 4♦ made but scored poorly.

And what happened? 1♠ went 4 down at Table A (200 to N-S) and this was only beaten by Table B (3 down, 500). ♦ contracts made 10 or 11 tricks but scored poorly.

The bottom lines. When the opponents bid your best suit it may piss you off, but think about a pass. Even if they are non-vul you may get a good score (as here). Double would be take-out and so you have to accept the undoubled penalty. If you are doubled at the one level and have a really poor suit (as East here), remember the SOS redouble.

Too strong for a 1♥ opener?

Board 14 from Monday 22nd, love all.

North (F)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ K106	♠ Q5	-	-	pass	pass
♥ AJ842	♥ K5	pass	1♥ (1)	pass	1NT (2)
♦ K	♦ 9863	pass	3♣ (3)	pass	4♣ (4)
♣ AKQJ	♣ 98752	pass	5♣ (5)	all pass	

A reasonable final contract, but let's study the bidding: -

- (1) Perhaps the most important decision on this deal, what do you open? Now many believe that 21 points is too much for a 1♥ opening, but is there an alternative? Just suppose that you play strong two's (or Benjamin), is the North hand worth 2♥? It's 21 points but actually does not have the required playing strength for a strong two. The Hand is nowhere near worth a 2♣ opener (2♦ playing Benjamin), but how about 2NT? Now some experts do in fact say that a singleton ace or king is acceptable – the reason being that otherwise hands like this have to open one of a suit. I personally would not argue with a 2NT opener, nor with 1♥ or a strong 2♥ (I'm an easy going guy); any could work out best. I would open 1♥, with a strong 2♥ (via Benjamin) my 2nd choice. Bear in mind that if partner cannot respond to a 1♥ opening, then game is probably not on. This is a poor 21 count (a singleton king is not good, neither is 10 points in a 4 card suit).
- (2) Anyway, this North chose a perfectly acceptable 1♥, but should South bid at (2) or pass? Bidding 1NT is very dubious – only 5 points and all of the points in two two card suits! However, there are two factors that indicate that bidding may work out best. First, 60% of the points are in partner's suit. And secondly partner has opened 1♥ in fourth seat; now a 1♠ opening in fourth seat may be a borderline opener, but any other opening has to be full value +. Would I respond or pass? On balance, I would pass.
- (3) Obvious. Once partner has responded a game forcing 3♣ bid is definitely in order.
- (4) The auction is now game forcing and so I would bid 5♣ – fast arrival. South had a very dubious initial response and a jump to game in a game forcing situation shows a minimum and warns partner.
- (5) Luckily North did not go slamming.

And what happened? 5♣ made, whether it would have or not if West had risen with the ♦A when a ♦ was played from dummy we will never know. 4♥ was bid and made at another table (but it went down twice) and 1♥ was passed out twice – good enough for above average if you make 10 tricks.

Just a detour into the play. You are West and hold ♦Axx and a ♦ is led from dummy; do you smoothly play low or charge in with the ace? Normally it's best to play low, but the bidding may affect this choice. Declarer has shown a huge hand with at least 5♥'s and 4♣'s. He has only 4 cards (max) in the pointed suits. A singleton king is a strong possibility! Going up with the ace only (possibly) loses in a few cases (if declarer has ♦KJ, or partner has singleton ♦K), but would declarer be in such a hurry to play the suit with these holdings??

The bottom lines. Sometimes you have no choice but to open at the one level with as many as 21 points! Very occasionally 2nd hand plays high!

A 3NT rebid? – part 1

Board 10 from Monday 22nd, both vul.

Dealer: ♠ AK5
East ♥ KJ65
both vul ♦ 764
♣ 963

♠ 3 N ♠ Q7642
♥ AQ9732 W E ♥ 4
♦ J10532 S ♦ AQ9
♣ 10 ♣ AQJ8
♠ J1098
♥ 108
♦ K8
♣ K7542

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

This was not a success for E-W, what went wrong?

- (1) Playing a weak NT, so 2♥ is OK as it only promises a good 7-8 points.
- (2) This jump rebid shows 17-19 points. This is a really poor bid, the hand is 15 points but with a poor 5 card suit and a singleton in partner's suit I would rebid 2♠. This pair were playing Acol and so a 2NT rebid here would show 15-16 but (for the reasons I said) this hand is not even worth a 2NT rebid.
- (3) East's 3NT rebid promises a balanced 17-19 and with a good 6 card suit and two singletons 4♥ is a good bid in my opinion ...
- (4) ... unfortunately North knew just what to do with the 4♥ bid!

And what happened. Two down for a bottom. And the other tables? Various partscores, but I note that one pair did reach a silly 3NT (minus two). And how should the bidding go?

How about: -

Playing Standard American: 1♠ - 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - pass

Playing Acol: 1♠ - 2♥ - 2♠ - 3♥ - pass or 1♠ - 2♥ - 2♠ - pass

Obviously Standard American works better on this particular deal.

The bottom lines. Do not lie about your points with either your NT opening or NT rebid. Do not bid NT with misfits. Do not overbid with mis-fits. Definitely do not overbid in NT with mis-fits.

The 3NT rebid – part 2

Board 26 from Monday 22nd, both vul.

North South (B)

♠ KQ8763 ♠ J92
♥ 8 ♥ AK76
♦ 97 ♦ AQ
♣ KQJ10 ♣ A753

Table A:

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

Table B:

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

Table C:

(1) playing 4 card majors.

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

I was asked to comment on this board. Now as it happened all three of the N-S's at these tables were playing 4 card majors and, as I explain in detail on the next page, 1♥ is then the correct opening bid at (1).

A: So then, what did you rebid with Hand B in this week's quiz? I've been through this in previous news-sheets (45 + some others). When playing a strong NT the jump to 2NT shows 18-19 points and the double jump to 3NT shows a strong hand worth around 18-19 points but with a long strong suit. Playing a weak NT it's similar but the range is 17-19. This really is far better than the old fashioned approach of playing the jump to 3NT as showing 19 points. Anyway, why an experienced Acol player should want to bid 3NT rather than 2NT at (2) is beyond me, this is a non-spectacular 18 points. And what should responder do at (3)? If the 3NT bid promised a balanced 19 points, then I would look for slam – bid 4♣ (natural), but if it is the long suit variety then pass is correct.

B: So, it's catching! Eddie found the same 3NT bid that John G found at table A. I simply do not understand this from two very experienced players. This time North bid 4♠. Now I don't like this either. If 3NT is a long suit then pass is clear. If 3NT shows about a balanced 19 points then 4♣ looking for slam is best.

C: Finally somebody got the bid right. This time Chuck was South and obviously bid 2NT at (2). Unfortunately his partner could find no better bid than 4♠. 3♣ (forcing no matter what you play it as) is a better bid at (5) and slam should be easily reached. Fast arrival shows a weak hand and this North hand is a monster.

And what happened? 4♠ was reached 5 times, it made 12 tricks on just 3 occasions (12 tricks are cold, you do not need the ♦ finesse and even the 4-0 trump break is irrelevant). Just one pair managed to bid slam (but they went down in 6♠!). Obviously 6♣, 6♠ or 6NT are excellent contracts. Now as I said, South should rebid 2NT at (2) and then bid 3♠ over partner's 3♣. Partner will then get to 6♠ which South may pass or even pull it to 6NT in order to protect the ♦AQ. If you feel that you prefer to play in NT to protect the ♦AQ then this is the time to insist upon NT, do not make the silly 3NT bid at (2).

The bottom lines. The jump to 2NT shows 18-19 points and leaves the final contract open. The double jump to 3NT promises less high card points but shows a good long suit that definitely wants to play in NT. It does not invite partner to bid on unless there is a slam.

4 Card Majors

At the end of the Monday session a group of players were discussing the hands and I was asked to comment upon boards 25 & 26, and in particular my opinion of the correct opening bid when playing a 4 card major system. I guess that the asker did not really expect 2 pages!

Hand A (25) Hand B (26)

♠ 86	♠ J92
♥ A872	♥ AK76
♦ KQ764	♦ AQ
♣ K9	♣ A753

I said that 1♦ is correct with Hand A and that 1♥ is correct with Hand B. I.e. you do not open a 4 card major if you have a 5 card minor but you do open a 4 card major if you have just a 4 card minor. Hans was present and predictably said that that was totally wrong and that with a 4 card minor and a 4 card major you always open 'up the line' and open the minor. Well I'm used to this sort of thing by now, so I wandered off and got the latest issue of UK's 'Bridge Magazine'. I come prepared. They have a bidding quiz every month with a reasonably sophisticated version of Acol; the rules are spelled out and the very first line says '*4 card majors with a major bid before a minor and ♥'s before ♠'s*' So, pretty clear, eh?

Hans said that 'nobody bids like that any more'. Now I guess that Hans can call John G, Eddie, Phil and Chuck 'nobody' – they all opened 1♥ with Hand B on Monday (Chuck's partner insisted upon playing 4 card majors), and I don't really mind what anybody calls me, but isn't it going a bit far to call the whole of the UK 'nobody'? What Hans really meant, of course, is 'nobody in Holland bids like that anymore'. This statement is largely correct.

So Acol is a 4 card major system and it means just that, open a 4 card major (if 1NT is not an option) unless you have a longer minor. With Hans' variation I believe that he will only open a 4 card major if exactly 4333 (then 1♠) or 3433, 4432, 4423 (then 1♥). Now Hans' system is very playable but it can hardly be called a 4 card major system! In fact, it is the system advocated by Dutch experts such as Westra/Leufkens and is called Dutch Acol. It differs from Acol in two very important points – it has a strong NT and a 4 card major is very rarely opened. I really can't see the point of a system that only occasionally opens a 4 card major; surely it's better to do it most of the time (Acol) or never (play a 5 card major system)?

Time for some history. Acol was originally 4 card majors with a variable NT (weak when non-vul and strong when vul). It became apparent that the strong NT with 4 card majors combination was unsatisfactory, and so the Brits changed to weak NT throughout. And what did the Dutch do? They borrowed Acol from the Brits but tried to 'improve' it by changing to a strong NT throughout. After a number of painful experiences they realized that this did not work (I give a couple of examples of why overleaf). So they changed the bidding style to avoid opening a 4 card major whenever possible – what a mish-mash. I much prefer the British solution, or the straightforward American approach. If 4 card majors don't work with the strong NT then they don't work with the weak NT – so don't mess about, play 5 card majors (America) or play a weak NT (Britain).

Dutch Acol vs Standard American

Standard American (5 card majors and a strong NT) is the complete opposite of Acol. Dutch Acol is very far removed from Acol, and in fact it is

virtually the same as Standard American. As far as I can see, the only difference between Standard American and Dutch Acol is the opening bid on these 4 hand shapes (4333, 3433, 4432 and 4423) when outside the range of 15-17 pts. So which is the best opening? Playing Dutch Acol you open a major and this means that all minor suit openings promise a 4 card suit. Playing Standard American you open a minor and this means that all major suit openings promise a 5 card suit. So it boils down to: which is most important for partner to know – that you opening minor suit is always 4+ cards or that your opening major suit is always 5+ cards? I think it's obvious, but who am I to argue with the likes of Berry Westra? I'll leave it up to you.

The 4441 Type Hand (playing 4 card majors)

So, let's forget about Dutch Acol (it is not a 4 card major system) and consider a system such as Acol where you frequently open a 4 card major. Whenever you open 1♥/♠ then you obviously need to have a rebid in mind. When you open a 4 card major you cannot then rebid another suit as that would promise 5 cards in the major; thus whenever you open a 4 card major then your rebid is always NT unless you can support partner.

Hand L	Hand M
♠ AQ76	♠ AQ76
♥ A872	♥ A872
♦ K984	♦ AQ84
♣ 9	♣ 9

There is just one problem, the 4441 type hand – notoriously difficult in any system. If the hand is outside your 1NT opening range Acol players open 1♥ (1♠ if 4144) and then rebid NT if partner bids the singleton. I hate to bid NT with a singleton in partner's suit but there's no alternative here. But the main problem is when your 4441 type hand is within your 1NT opening range: - Obviously you cannot open 1NT with a singleton and you cannot

rebid NT as that would show an incorrect point count; so in this situation you have to open a 4 card minor even though you have one (or two) 4 card majors. Suppose you play Acol (weak NT), then with Hand M you can open 1♥ as you have a 2NT rebid (15-16) if partner bids 2♣. But with Hand L you have to open 1♦; if partner is inconsiderate enough to respond 2♣ then you have no option but to lie with a rebid of 2♦. If you open 1♥ and partner responds 2♣ then 2♦ would promise 5♥'s. Sometimes you have to lie, and it's better to lie in minor suit length than to lie about your major suit length or your point count (by bidding NT out of range).

Playing a strong NT you have the same problem but the other way round – you open Hand L with 1♥ but you have to open Hand M with 1♦.

So, playing 4 card majors, you do not always open a 4 card major – with a 5 card minor open the 5 card minor, with NT shape within your 1NT range open 1NT and with 4441 type hands within your 1NT range open a minor.

Now most experienced Acol players know all this, but my advice is to play 5 card majors! You can play 5 card majors with a strong NT (Standard American, 2/1 etc.) or with a weak NT (no name as far as I know). 4 card majors work reasonably well with the weak NT (Acol) but I personally detest the fourth combination (4 card majors with a strong NT), *it does not work* – that's why Berry Westra and co. developed 'Dutch Acol' which rarely opens a 4 card major. If you don't like to open 4 card majors (I concur), then play 5 card majors!

So what's wrong with the 4 card major and strong NT combination?....

Hand Nin short, lots. Just take this hand as an example; if you play this system, then
♠ AJ76	1♠ is the opening with this hand. A 1♠ opening takes up a lot of room and a
♥ J82	2♣/♦ response is quite likely. This is a balanced hand in the 12-14 point range
♦ A97	and so a NT rebid is called for, so 2NT in this case. If partner has responded on
♣ K92	11 points (or, heaven forbid, 10 points) then 2NT is in real danger of going
	down. Playing a sensible system it's easy to stop in 1NT. And consider this sequence a
	little further; suppose that responder has a good 11-12 points.

He will then raise your 2NT bid to 3NT which will not make. Why have you got into this pickle? Because the wrong hand is doing the inviting. It should be the 11-12 point hand inviting the hand with the 12-14 point spread. The whole mess is caused by the initial opening on a 4 major card suit (in conjunction with the NT rebid being just 12-14 points). It simply does not work, and this example is just the tip of the iceberg. Best to open 1♣, keep the bidding low. Standard American is the system to play. And when you've mastered that, move on to the best 'basically natural' system of all – 2/1.

Respond with 6 points!

		<u>Table A:</u>			
		West	North	East	South
Board 1 from Monday 22 nd , love all.		-	-	pass	1NT (1)
North (E)	South (J)	pass	pass	pass	

		<u>Table B:</u>			
		West	North	East	South
♠ K63	♠ J985	-	-	pass	1♠ (1)
♥ 765	♥ AQ10	pass	pass (2)	pass	
♦ 73	♦ AQJ				
♣ K5432	♣ AJ10				

		<u>Table C:</u>			
		West	North	East	South
		-	-	pass	1♦ (1)
		pass	1NT	pass	3NT (3)
		pass	pass	pass	

Table A: I know that Hans would never open 1NT on this, so I guess that this was his partner (Jan) playing a 15-18 (19, whatever....) 1NT? A really poor opening which did not get its just deserts as 3 other players mis-bid the North hand. I don't know why it's always Hans' partners who bid these really silly 1NT openers – I'm pretty sure that Hans gives them a good ticking off every time? Hans is obviously more tolerant than me, I simply would not play with people who *repeatedly* bid like this. I'm tolerant enough with beginners but only if they are willing to learn.

Table B: A 19 count, so what should you open? It's totally flat (4333) but has excellent intermediates. Thus it's still worth 19 points and so you open 1♣ (1♠ if you play 4 card majors) and jump in NT next bid. Mind you, it won't work if partner fails to respond at (2)! Quite why three players passed a 1♠ opening is beyond me! This North hand is a reasonable 6 count (it's not flat), kings are good cards and Kxx in partner's suit is certainly a good holding. Playing 5 card majors then 2♠ is correct. Playing 4 card majors then it's a toss up, either 1NT or 2♠ could work out best (just another reason why I prefer 5 card majors!). Pass at (2) is pathetic.

Table C: A good sequence playing Standard American although I prefer to open 1♣ with equal length in the minors. 3NT at (3) shows a good 18-19 points whatever system you play; 2NT would show 17-18.

And what happened? 3NT made exactly the two times it was bid. 1NT (+2) got an undeserved average score as *three* pairs subsided in a silly 1♠ (+1).

The bottom line? Do not open 1NT with 19 points! Respond to partner's one level suit opening when you have 6 points. Remember that a 1NT response does not promise a balanced hand when partner opens 1♠, it shows 6-10 points and could be virtually any shape.

'I would object'!

Board 20 from Monday 22nd, both vul.

Dealer: ♠ KJ54
West ♥ K1095
both vul ♦ KJ6
♣ Q2

♠ 98763 N ♠ AQ2
♥ J W E ♥ A83
♦ Q8 S ♦ A32
♣ 98765 ♣ AK103
♠ 10
♥ Q7642
♦ 109754
♣ J4

(1) weak, 12-14

Table A:

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

Table B:

West	North	East	South
pass	1NT (1)	dbl (2)	2♥ (4)
2♠ (5)	pass	4♠	pass
pass	pass		

Table C:

West	North	East	South
pass	1NT (1)	dbl (2)	redbl (6)
2♠	pass	pass (7)	pass

A weak NT was opened at these three tables, but then the bidding diverged: -

Table A: This 2♣ overcall at (2) is woefully inadequate. When RHO opens 1NT you should normally double (penalties) with 15 or more points. And, of course, passing with 21 points is feeble at (3).

Table B: Everybody got this right. South should run from the double at (4) and bidding 2♥ is fine. West has decent shape and decided to make a free bid at (5) which East understandably raised to game. West played it well and the game duly made.

Table C: Now this table is where the controversy was. N-S play a somewhat complex escape system after their 1NT opening is doubled, and redouble at (6) here showed a weak hand (I think) and forces partner to bid a suit. Now this is not standard (standard is that redouble shows a strong hand) but North failed to alert the bid. When the bidding was completed the director was called and the failure to alert explained. I said to play the hand out and then call me back. Now this time declarer was not quite on the ball (perhaps he was a bit flustered by the unnecessary agro?) and the 2♠ contract went one down. When I returned to the table after the play I said that there was no need to adjust the score, but if West had made 10 tricks then an adjusted score (4♠ bid, making) would be in order as it is possible that East passed at (7) because South had shown values (but there's not many values left!). South then stuck his oar in by saying that he would object. I checked with the club's leading player and he agreed that my ruling would have been fair (if West had made 10 tricks).

Incidentally, this same N-S pair got a good score last week when the bidding went 1NT – double – pass (1) – pass – redouble (2) – all pass. Apparently the pass at (1) showed values and demanded that opener redouble at (2). None of this was alerted and they got a top score. I shall try to be more vigilant in my director duties in future.

The bottom lines. If you play any complex/non-standard conventions then you must alert. The director may give an adjusted score at *his* discretion. I really don't see the need to argue with the director (or other players), this is a friendly club, isn't it? It's not as if we are battling it out for green points or the Gold Cup. And will people bear in mind that some people's hearing is not too good (we're all getting older) and that not everybody is fluent in English.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: 1♦. Playing Acol you open a 5 card minor in preference to a 4 card major.
- Hand B: (a) 1♥. Playing Acol you open a 4 card major in preference to a 4 card minor. Playing Standard American you open 1♣ of course. The hand is not totally flat (it has two reasonable 4 card suits) and so it is too good for a strong 1NT opener. The hand has 18 points; the ♦ AQ are a –ve factor but the ♠ 9 and two aces and a king in 4 card suits are more than enough compensation; the hand is well worth 18 points after evaluation.
(b) 2NT. 18-19 pts (or 17-19 if you play a weak NT). A double jump 3NT rebid is best used to show a good hand with a good long suit. 3NT is especially poor here with 3 card ♠ support for partner; there could be a good 5-3 or even 6-3 ♠ fit (as with the actual deal) and you may miss slam.
- Hand C: 3NT. This is a typical double jump 3NT rebid. It shows a good hand with a good long suit and does not invite partner to look for another contract unless he has enough for slam.
- Hand D: (a) 1♠ is correct ...
(b) ... but after a 1NT rebid from partner it's tricky. Would you play 2♥ as weak, invitational or forcing? Best is to play 2♥ as weak and play 2♣ as Checkback Stayman, showing 5 ♠'s and often 4 ♥'s, with invitational or better values. It asks opener to clarify his major suit holdings (4 ♥'s or 3 ♠'s). So 2♣, Checkback, here.
- Hand E: 2♠. Better than 1NT (support with support). This is trivial of course, so why is it in the quiz? – Because *three* players passed on Monday.
- Hand F: This is the type of hand that does not appear in bidding books – because there is no perfect answer! The correct opening is the one that works on the day! The sensible alternatives are 1♥, a strong 2♥ (if you play strong twos or Benjamin twos), or 2NT; and that is my order of preference. I would open 1♥ but would not argue with a strong 2♥. I'm not keen on 2NT.
- Hand G: Pass. Double is a poor choice; not only because you have only 3 ♥'s but because you will be fixed if partner bids a quite likely 2♣.
- Hand H: Pass. I like to have 4 ♥'s for a take-out double of 1♠.
- Hand J: 1♣ (or 1♦ if that's what you prefer) and then jump to 2NT showing 18-19 points. Do not open 1NT (it's far too strong). If you open 1NT with hands like this, partner will pass with 6 or 7 points and you will miss game.
- Hand K: (a) I would (did) open 1NT. This is because
(b) ... there is no good rebid if you open 1♣. 1NT shows 12-14, 2♦ would be a reverse (strong – this hand is not good enough in my/Chuck's style) and 2♣ would normally be a 6 card suit. If you do open 1♣ then you would have to grit your teeth and rebid 2♣. It's not good enough for 3♣.

Last week's winners: Monday 29/3/04

Friday 2/4/04

1st Chuck/Hans 64%1st Jim/Tomas 66%2nd Laine/Sirkkala 63%2nd Hans/Jan 62%Monday 19th (so two weeks time) will be Songcran in Pattaya, the Bridge will be cancelled.**Bidding Quiz****Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.**

Hand A

Hand B

With Hand A partner opens 2♣ and RHO doubles, what do you bid?

♠ K10653

♠ AJ6543

♥ 96

♥ AK6

♦ 862

♦ QJ5

♣ 972

♣ 3

With hand B you open 1♠, LHO overcalls 2♥ and partner bids 2♠. The opponents compete to 4♥, what do you do?

Hand C

Hand D

With Hand C RHO deals and passes, what do you do?

♠ -

♠ K10876

♥ Q842

♥ KJ64

♦ AJ87543

♦ A109

♣ J6

♣ 3

Hand D has just 11 points, so do you open or pass in 1st seat?

Hand E

Hand F

With hand E you open 1♥ and partner responds 1♠, what is your rebid?

♠ K109

♠ QJ3

♥ AKQ972

♥ A1064

♦ 82

♦ AK8

♣ AQ

♣ J109

With Hand F you are playing a weak NT. So you open 1♥ or 1♣ or 1♦ (it does not really matter) and partner responds 1NT. What now?

A Nice SequenceBoard 23 from Monday 29th, both vul.

North

South

West

North

East

South

♠ KQ853

♠ A109

-

-

-

pass

♥ AQJ4

♥ K9875

1♦

dbl (1)

2♦

2♥ (2)

♦ 102

♦ 96

pass

4♥ (3)

all pass

♣ AJ

♣ 872

This is a nice sequence. With a strong hand and both majors, I prefer a double at (1) to a 1♠ overcall. 2♥ at (2) is a free bid and promises values (about 6-9, could be less with good shape). 4♥ at (3) is then clear. Now 3 pairs reached 4♥ on Monday but 3 did not. I don't know the bidding, but one pair stopped in 3♥, one in 3♠ and one was in an inferior 4♠. I can't see any sensible sequence that fails to find 4♥. Maybe somebody can enlighten me?

The Beginner's Page

Jacoby Transfers

When partner opens 1NT then he has said it all – a balanced hand in the 15-17 point range, with at least two cards in every suit.

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4	Hand 5
♠ 982	♠ J92	♠ K92	♠ K92	♠ K92
♥ Q10852	♥ AQ1052	♥ AQ1052	♥ AQ1052	♥ AQ1052
♦ J87	♦ J87	♦ J87	♦ A107	♦ A107
♣ Q9	♣ 95	♣ 95	♣ Q5	♣ A5

Consider these five hands after partner has opened 1NT (15-17). They all have a decent 5 card ♥ suit and either ♥'s or NT could possibly be the final contract with all five. But Hand 1 is weak, Hand 2 is invitational, Hand 3 is worth game, Hand 4 is slam invitational and Hand 5 is definitely worth slam. But how do we inform partner that we have a ♥ suit and then also tell partner about our strength?

With traditional natural methods you bid naturally. So 1♥, weak with hand 1. With Hands 3,4 and 5 you bid 3♥, forcing. Quite what you are meant to do with hand 2 is undefined. Just toss a coin? Of course it's totally unworkable, you cannot define weak, invitational and strong hands with just two bids (2♥ & 3♥); the solution was found by Oswald Jacoby. With all of these hands your first bid is 2♦, a transfer that says that you have 5 ♥'s (any strength) and requests partner to bid 2♥, regardless of his strength or ♥ holding. The same applies with a ♠ suit, when 2♥ is the transfer bid.

Once opener complies with our transfer request, we then show the strength of our hand. In all of these examples we have a 5 card ♥ suit. Our initial transfer promises at least 5 cards in the suit and so we *do not* repeat it. All of these hands are relatively balanced and so NT is the natural rebid.

How does the bidding progress with our 5 example hands?

Hand 1: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - pass. This hand is not strong enough to bid again. You need 8-9 points to invite and so the only options were to pass the original 1NT or to transfer and then pass.

Transferring usually works out best.

Hand 2: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 2NT. An invitational sequence. With a minimal hand, opener may either pass or bid 3♥. With a maximum he will bid either 3NT or 4♥.

Hand 3: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 3NT. This shows game values with 5 ♥'s. If opener has 4 ♥'s he will convert to 4♥; if opener has only 2 ♥'s he will pass 3NT; if opener has 3 ♥'s he usually elects to go for the 5-3 fit but may pass 3NT with good holdings in the other suits.

Hand 4: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 4NT. This is a slam invitation showing a 5 card ♥ suit.

Hand 5: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 4♣. As we use 4NT as a natural slam invitation this is Gerber, asking for aces on the way to slam. I will cover ace asking conventions (Blackwood and Gerber) in subsequent news-sheets.

Fine, but what does responder do if he has an unbalanced hand and so does not want to bid NT at his 2nd turn? Perhaps a 6 card suit, or a 2nd suit? We will cover this when we look at Jacoby transfers in more detail next week.

When they interfere with our big bidBoard 25 from Monday 29th, E-W vul.

Dealer: ♠ J87
 North ♥ 1043
 E-W vul ♦ J43
 ♣ J1086

Table A:
 West (A) North East South
 - pass 2♦ (1) dbl
 2♥ (2) pass 4♥ all pass

♠ K10653 N ♠ A94
 ♥ 96 W E ♥ AQJ2
 ♦ 862 S ♦ A7
 ♣ 972 ♣ AKQ5
 ♠ Q2
 ♥ K875
 ♦ KQ1095
 ♣ 43

Table B:
 West North East South
 - pass 2♣ (3) dbl
 pass (4) pass 2NT (5) pass
 3♥ (6) pass 4♥ all pass

(1) weak, 12-14

Table C:
 West North East South
 - pass 2♣ (3) pass
 2♦ (7) pass 2NT (8) pass
 3♥ (9) pass 3♠ (10) pass
 3NT (11) pass 4♠ (12) all pass

There were a number of silly contracts on this deal from Monday, let's have a look at three of the tables: -

Table A: This pair were playing Benjamin two's (I think) and 2♦ at (1) was their big bid (23+). Now normally 2♥ at (2) is then the negative (or relay), but things change when the opponents interfere. There is no need to bid with a minimum and any bid (such as 2♥ here) is natural and shows a positive response.

Table B: This pair played Standard American, so 2♣ is the biggest bid. Quite why South doubled this bid I don't know, but West correctly passed at (4) showing a minimum. 2NT at (5) shows a balanced 22-24. This hand is probably a bit too good, but never mind. If your partner opens 2NT (either directly or via 2♣) then it's best to play Stayman and transfers. Thus West's 3♥ at (6) was a transfer, unfortunately East thought it was natural.

Table C: A reasonable auction to the top spot. 2♦ is negative or a relay, whatever you play it as (you pass if RHO interferes). 2NT at (8) is a balanced 22-24. 3♥ at (9) is a transfer and East simply accepts at (10). 3NT at (11) offers East the choice of games and East correctly elected to play in the 5-3 fit at (12).

And what happened? The board was played 6 times and only one pair found 4♠. One pair somehow reached a silly 6♠, but made it! Two pairs stopped in 2NT. I don't know the bidding, but West should always transfer and it's worth game opposite a 2♣ opener.

The bottom lines. It's best to play Stayman and transfers after partner has opened 2NT or has bid 2NT having opened 2♣ (or 2♦). If the opponents interfere with your partner's 2♣ bid, then pass unless you have something definite to say.

Let's have a summary of big balanced hand bidding playing Standard American: -

15-17	open 1NT
18-19	open 1 of a suit and then jump in NT
20-21	open 2NT
22-24	open 2♣ and rebid 2NT
25+	open 2♣ and rebid 3NT*

* I personally don't like this 3NT rebid as you then cannot then use Stayman and transfers below the level of 3NT (so I prefer to play Benjamin twos, then 2♦ and rebid 2NT is 25+). But, unfortunately, Benjamin twos have not yet made it across the pond. They are totally compatible with the rest of Standard American, but it's not caught on yet in U.S.A.

Bid game or double?

Table A:

Board 8 from Friday 2nd, love all.

		West	North	East (B)	South
Dealer:	♠ 102	pass	pass (1)	1♠	2♥
West	♥ 1092	2♠	3♥	3♠ (2)	pass
Love all	♦ K1073	pass	4♥ (3)	dbl (4)	all pass
	♣ AK64				

Table B:

♠ KQ97	N	♠ AJ6543			
♥ 73	W E	♥ AK6	West	North	East
♦ 62	S	♦ QJ5			South
♣ J10752		♣ 3	pass	pass	1♠
	♠ 8		2♠	3♥	4♠
	♥ QJ854		pass	pass	pass
	♦ A984				
	♣ Q98				

Table A: The North hand is 11 points but has excellent intermediates and all the points are in the long suits. A 1♣ opening is a reasonable alternative to pass. Anyway, it's all very sensible up to (2); with a 6 card suit, excellent shape, and controls in the enemy suit, I would bid 4♠ here. And what about this 4♥ bid at (3)? Silly – remember The Law, if you think that it's such a nice hand then why not open? Anyway, the initial pass was fine, you have supported partner and can be sure of only 8 combined trumps. The 4♥ bid is silly here because it violates the Law (insufficient trumps by two) and if the opponents bid 4♠ then that may make! Well then, did you bid 4♠ or double at (4) with hand B in this week's quiz? 4♠ is clear. It will probably make and you cannot count on any more than two tricks in defence.

Table B: A sensible auction all round.

And what happened? 4♥ was bid and doubled twice, it went one down. 4♠ was bid twice and made exactly on both occasions.

The bottom line. AK of the opponent's suit are good cards, whether you are declarer or defending.

Beware of favourable vulnerability?Board 5 from Friday 2nd, N-S vul.

Dealer:	♠ J43		West	North	East	South
North	♥ A63					
N-S vul	♦ 1042		-	1♣	pass	1♦ (1)
	♣ AK62		1♥	1NT (2)	2♥	2♠ (3)
			pass	3♠	pass	4♠
♠ 1096	N	♠ 872	pass	pass	5♥ (4)	pass
♥ KQJ42	W E	♥ 10985	pass	dbl	all pass	
♦ A9	S	♦ QJ3				
♣ 954		♣ QJ7				
	♠ AKQ5					
	♥ 7					
	♦ K8765					
	♣ 1083					

5♥ went minus 4 for a clear bottom. There was some discussion of the bidding after the hand, let's have a look: -

1♦ is best here, it is not denying a 4 card major and this hand is strong enough to bid ♠'s later. The 1NT bid at (2) is still 12-14, but it is usually upper range with a stop as you can pass with a weaker hand. The 2♠ bid at (3) is a reverse, but there was a debate about how many ♠'s (and ♦'s) the bid shows. North maintained that as he denied 4 ♠'s with his 1NT bid at (2) that South should have 5 ♠'s (and thus 6 ♦'s) for the bid. I don't see it that way and agree with South's bid, surely South is simply bidding out his shape and showing his strength? Consider the similar sequence 1♦ - 1NT - 2♠; this is a reverse, promising 5♦'s and 4♠'s; I don't see that the fact that the 1NT bidder opened the bidding with 1♣ here is relevant. And, I ask, what is South meant to bid at (3) if not 2♠?

Anyway, N-S reached a somewhat dubious 4♠ but then East rescued them at (4)! What was East thinking? He has 9 combined trumps, that is two below what's required for the 5 level in these situations. With some sort of ruffing value it might be OK, but with a totally flat hand and all the points in opponent's suits this hand is far more suited for defence. Also, listen to the bidding! It is by no means clear that the opponents are in a comfortable contract, it could (should?) easily be a 4-3 fit. And, what's more, you have an obvious lead (a ♥); North probably only has one ♥ stop (else he would elect for NT rather than a 4-3 fit) and the long trump hand is going to be forced. 4♠ is very likely to play badly even with the kind 3-3 ♠ split. And since partner probably has 3 losing ♠'s, 5♥ will be massacred.

What happened? 800 away, when ♠ contracts at other tables made only 8 or 9 tricks.

It's time to look at The Law in more detail. The full version says that the total number of tricks is equal to the total number of trumps. Let's look at it from East's standpoint. Here N-S probably have just 7 trumps (♠'s) and E-W have 9 ♥'s. That's a total of 16 tricks. In the unlikely event that 4♠ actually makes, then that's 10 tricks and so a 5♥ contract goes 5 down!

The bottom line. It is often a good idea to sacrifice at favourable vulnerability, but not with a flat hand that is ideal for defence! Quacks in opponents suit are reasonable cards if the opponents are declaring, they are virtually worthless if you side is declaring. Listen to the bidding. Don't sacrifice against contracts that are not going to make! Obey the Law.

An Easy game missed

Board 11 from Monday 29th, love all.

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ AQ108652	♠ K9	-	-	-	pass
♥ -	♥ K92	1♠	pass	1NT	pass
♦ A95	♦ Q108742	3♠ (1)	pass	4♠ (2)	all pass
♣ K92	♣ 106				

This was the bidding at two tables on Monday. The first two bids are pretty obvious and West's 3♠ at (1) is fine. With 8 points and the trump king, East should certainly go on to game at (2).

So why have I included such a simple hand? Three pairs failed to reach game. A 1♠ opener was passed out once (East cannot pass). Other contracts were 2♠ and 3♠, I don't know the bidding, but I don't see how 4♠ can be missed. 4♠ at (1) would not be unreasonable and even a 4♠ opening would be found by some. All avenues lead to 4♠?

A Soar Thumb

Board 22 from Monday 29th, E-W vul.

North	South (F)	<u>Table A</u>			
		West	North	East	South
♠ 952	♠ QJ3	-	-	pass	1NT
♥ Q32	♥ A1064	pass	pass	pass	
♦ Q10	♦ AK8				
♣ Q8765	♣ J109	<u>Table B</u>			
		West	North	East	South
		-	-	pass	1♥
		pass	1NT (1)	pass	2NT (2)
		pass	pass	pass	

Table A: This board was played 6 times, and 5 times the auction was as Table A. Very sensible; the South hand is totally flat but the excellent intermediates and honour combinations make it worth a 1NT opener.

Table B: So what happened at Table B? Playing Acol 1♥ is the correct opening and 1NT is correct at (1). Now this is where some Acol bidders go astray; the South hand is 15 points and so is a 1NT rebid. If partner had responded 1♠ then 1NT would have been correct, and if partner had responded 2♣/♦ then 2NT would have been correct. But what after a 1NT response? The answer is that the 1NT response is 6-9 (often the lower range, as partner can respond 2♣/♦ with 8 or more points) and so the raise to 2NT at (2) shows 17-18 points; i.e. the same as a 2NT bid if partner had responded 1♠ instead of 1NT when playing Acol.

And what happened? The 2NT contract by N-S stuck out like a sore thumb on the score sheet as it went 1 down and was the only +ve entry in the E-W column. 1NT either made exactly or +1 at other tables.

The bottom line. The sequence 1x – 1NT – 2NT shows 17-18 points. This is true whatever system you play.

Perfect Partners?

Board 6 from Friday 2nd, E-W vul.

West	East (D)	West	North	East	South
♠ A2	♠ K10876	-	-	pass	pass
♥ AQ1075	♥ KJ64	pass	pass		
♦ 764	♦ A109				
♣ J106	♣ 3				

4♥ was bid at two other tables, making and making +2 (!). After this ‘auction’ East was asked why he had not opened – he replied that he never opens with 11 points. And what about West? Again, a clear opener – especially in 3rd seat.

Let’s start with the East hand. It has two good suits, an ace, and a singleton – what more do you want? It has good intermediates and, very importantly, it is easy to bid . You open 1♠ and have an easy rebid of 2♥. I guess that pass is easier, but it’s not bridge in my book.

And the West hand? Not quite as nice but a sound opener, especially in 3rd seat. The 5 card suit is a good one, two aces are good, and even the jack is not too bad as it’s backed up by the 10.

Since both of these players think alike then they are obviously perfect for each other.

The bottom line. Be sensible and upgrade for long major suits, singletons, aces etc etc. If in doubt, see if there is an easy rebid (as with this East hand). 3rd seat may (should?) open light (but not 1NT).

Just as an aside; two (!) players have asked me about the wisdom of opening 1NT below strength in 3rd seat. It is *totally* unsound. Your 1NT opener in 3rd seat needs to be up-to-strength, and I will not even open a weak NT (playing Acol) in 3rd seat. Too dangerous.

A poor Pre-empt

Board 2 from Monday 29th, N-S vul.

North	South (C)	<u>Table A</u>			
		West	North	East	South
♠ Q1076	♠ -	-	-	pass	3♦
♥ AJ1093	♥ Q842	pass	pass (1)	pass	
♦ 9	♦ AJ87543				
♣ AQ10	♣ J6				

		<u>Table B</u>			
		West	North	East	South
		-	-	pass	3♦
		pass	3NT (1)	all pass	

No less than 4 South’s found the poor 3♦ opening and an easy 4♥ was missed. Generally speaking, you should not pre-empt when you hold a 4 card major. This South hand has far too much playing strength if there is a ♥ fit. South should pass. And what should North do at (1)? I would pass, but then I don’t expect partner to have playing strength in a major when he pre-empts.

And what happened? Two pairs played in 3♦ and two other pairs in an almost equally silly 3NT. The top scores for E-W were the pair who bid 4♥ (+1) and another pair who also bid to 4♥ and then doubled the 4♠ sacrifice.

The bottom lines. Do not pre-empt with a 4 card major, especially if partner is not a passed hand.

An Easy Game Missed

Board 13 from Monday 29th, both vul.

North (E) South

♠ K109 ♠ A8765
♥ AKQ972 ♥ 64
♦ 82 ♦ QJ5
♣ AQ ♣ 872

Table A

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

Table B

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

Table C

West	North	East	South
-	1♥ (1)	pass	1♠ (2)
pass	3♣	pass	3NT (5)
pass	pass (6)	pass	

3NT, 4♥ and 4♠ are all reasonable contracts, but game was missed 3 times on Monday: -

Table A: First of all, the opening bid. A nice hand, but you have to open 1♥ unless you play strong twos (or Benjamin). Obviously passing at (2) is very silly.

Table B: So we've got past the first hurdle (partner did not pass our 1♥ opening), but what now? A jump to 3♥ was the choice at three tables; unfortunately this is not forcing and it was passed twice. I would not pass at (4), but two players decided to.

Table C: This West found the solution. The West hand is a very good one and partner's ♠ bid improves it. I agree with Jim here that 3♥ is not forcing and so not a good bid. It does not matter that the ♣ suit is not real because you have support for partner's ♠'s and it is a stop if the final contract turns out to be NT. 3♣ is game forcing. 3NT at (5) worked out well but I would bid 3♠ to show the 5 card suit; also 4♥ at (6) is a sound alternative.

The bottom line. If the auction develops in such a way that you think game is on, then don't make an invitational bid.

Bidding Quiz Answers

Hand A: Pass. When the opponents interfere then you need not bid. Pass thus means the same as 2♦ if there was no intervention.

Hand B: Bid 4♠.

Hand C: Pass. Do not pre-empt with a 4 card major, especially if partner has not passed.

Hand D: 1♠. A clear opener in any seat.

Hand E: 3♣. It's tricky! This is the type of hand where you really want to be playing strong twos (or Benjamin twos). 3♥ would be the choice of many, but it's not forcing. Partner's 1♠ response has improved the hand (♠K109 are excellent cards) and so I prefer a forcing bid. 3♣ is probably best as it's not unilateral - 3NT, 4♥ or 4♠ could turn out to be the best final contract. 4♥ is also a reasonable bid, but I prefer 3♣.

Hand F: Pass. It does not matter what system you play, 2NT here promises 17-18 points.



Club News Sheet – No. 76

9/4/2004



Last week's winners: Monday 5/4/04

Friday 9/4/04

1st Alander/Hawssea 70%
 2nd Kenneth/Einar 55%

1st Chuck/Einar 62%
 2nd = Tomas/Mike & Hans/Jan 55%

Monday 19th (so next week) will be Songcran in Pattaya, the Monday Bridge will be cancelled.

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

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A RHO opens 1♣, what is your bid?
♠ Q7	♠ 7	With hand B partner opens 1♣, you bid 1♥ and partner rebids 1♠. What do you bid now?
♥ AKJ7	♥ AK9753	
♦ KQ109	♦ A7	
♣ J105	♣ K983	
Hand C	Hand D	An easy one. What do you open with hand C?
♠ J43	♠ A1076	With Hand D partner opens 2♣ and you reply 2♦ (negative). Partner then bids 3♦, what is your bid?
♥ K54	♥ J	
♦ QJ94	♦ 109864	
♣ AK2	♣ J32	
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E partner opens 1♣ and you bid 1♥. What is your rebid if partner now bids : (a) 2NT, (b) 3NT?
♠ A4	♠ AQ103	With hand F you open 1♦. LHO overcalls 2♣ and partner bids 2♥, what is your bid?
♥ A87643	♥ 75	
♦ 1075	♦ AK1063	
♣ J9	♣ 102	
Hand G	Hand H	(a) What do you open with Hand G? Suppose that you choose to open 1♣ then ... (b) what is your rebid when partner responds 1♥?
♠ K65	♠ 64	With Hand H partner opens 1♣ and RHO overcalls 1NT (15-18). What do you do?
♥ K10	♥ Q98653	
♦ AQ4	♦ J876	
♣ AK632	♣ Q	

Does the 2nd bid by West in these sequences show extra values (i.e. is it a reverse)?

	W	N	E	S	W
Sequence J:	1♦	2♣	2♥	pass	2♠?
Sequence K:	1♣	1♥	2♦	pass	2♠?
Sequence L:	1♥	pass	2♦	pass	2♠?
Sequence M:	1♥	2♣	2♦	pass	2♠?

The Beginner's Page

Jacoby Transfers cont.

This week, let's have a look at responding hands that are not relatively balanced: -

Hand 6	Hand 7	Hand 8	Hand 9	Hand 10	Hand 11
♠ 2	♠ J9	♠ 92	♠ 92	♠ J9	♠ 92
♥ Q10852	♥ AQ1052	♥ AQ1052	♥ AQ1052	♥ AQ10652	♥ AQ10652
♦ J8754	♦ J872	♦ KJ874	♦ AK107	♦ 872	♦ KJ87
♣ Q9	♣ 95	♣ 9	♣ A5	♣ 95	♣ 9

Consider the first 4 hands after partner has opened 1NT (15-17). They all have a decent 5 card ♥ suit but this week they also have a 2nd suit, so how should we bid them?

They all have a decent 5 card ♥ suit and either ♥'s, ♦'s or NT could possibly be the final contract with all four. But Hand 6 is weak, Hand 7 is invitational, Hand 8 is worth game and Hand 9 is worth slam. How do we inform partner that we have a ♥ suit plus a ♦ suit and then also tell partner about our strength?

We start off with a 2♦ transfer bid with all of the hands.

Once opener complies with our transfer request, we then show the strength of our hand. In the examples 6-9 we have a 5 card ♥ suit. Our initial transfer promises at least 5 cards in the suit and we can now bid our 2nd suit naturally (if we are strong enough). But be careful, a transfer followed by a 2nd suit is always game forcing.

How does the bidding progress with our first 4 example hands?

- Hand 6: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - pass. This hand is not strong enough to bid again. You need 8-9 points to invite and it's best to play unbalanced hands in a suit contract. You are not strong enough to look for a ♦ fit as a 3♦ bid would be game forcing.
- Hand 7: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 2NT. An invitational sequence, you cannot bid ♦'s as that would be game forcing; you really have no option but to treat the hand as balanced. With a minimal hand, opener may either pass or bid 3♥. With a maximum he will bid either 3NT or 4♥.
- Hand 8: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 3♦. This shows game values with 5 ♥'s and 4+ ♦'s. Partner should know enough to select the best game contract - 3NT, 4♥ or (rarely) 5♦.
- Hand 9: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 3♦. This sequence starts off the same, inform partner of your two suits and later investigate the best slam.

The last two hands (10&11) have a 6 card ♥ suit, how do we handle them? We start with a transfer and then bid the suit naturally - 3♥ is invitational to game and 4♥ is to play: -

Hand 10: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 3♥. This shows an invitational hand with 6 ♥'s. Partner will either pass or bid 4♥.

Hand 11: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 4♥. This shows game values with 6 ♥'s. Partner will pass.

Remember, you need a 6 card suit to transfer and then bid the suit again. If you transfer and then bid a new suit, this is game forcing.

Using 4th suit forcing

Board 22 from Monday 5th, E-W vul.

West (B) East

♠ 7 ♠ KQ93
♥ AK9753 ♥ Q4
♦ A7 ♦ 1064
♣ K983 ♣ AQ104

Table A:

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

Table B:

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

A comfortable 4♥ game was missed at 3 of the 4 tables on Monday, let's look at the bidding from two tables: -

Table A: So then, what did you bid at (1) with Hand B in this week's quiz? At table A West chose 3♥; unfortunately this is not forcing (it's invitational) and East chose to pass at (2).

Table B: So how should you bid the West hand? You have game going values (possibly slam) but 3♥ is only invitational and you cannot simply jump to 4♥ as partner may have no support. The answer is to bid the 4th suit (so 2♦) at (3); a subsequent bid of either partner's suit of your suit would then be forcing. What should East bid at (4)? The 4th suit bid is totally artificial and asks partner to describe his hand further. A 5 card suit may be rebid or you can support partner with 3 card support. A NT bid promises a stop in the 4th suit. This East hand is a bit of a problem, it has NT shape but no ♦ stop. I would bid 2♥ at (4) as, for me, a 2NT bid *guarantees* a stop.

Anyway, West was not really interested to know whether East had a ♦ stop or not, he only bid the 4th suit so that his 3♥ bid now at (5) is forcing. Unfortunately his partner was not used to playing 4th suit forcing and forgot that this subsequent bid was forcing.

And what happened? These two pairs made 11 and 12 tricks resp. One pair bid 4♥ and another 3NT, both made overtricks.

The bottom line. Fourth suit forcing may be rather complicated at times, but it really is very useful. It is often used to find out more about partner's shape and/or if he has a stop for NT, but a useful offshoot is that raising partner or rebidding one's own suit after invoking the 4th suit is forcing.

Bid that 4 card majorBoard 26 from Monday 5th, both vul.

West East (D)

♠ QJ ♠ A1076

♥ AQ87 ♥ J

♦ AKQJ5 ♦ 109864

♣ A4 ♣ J32

As I often state, 3NT is usually a better scoring contract than 5 of a minor: -

Table A:

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

Table B:

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

Table A: 2♦ at (1) is either negative or waiting, whatever you play it as. 3♦ at (2) is obvious and game forcing. But here's the crunch, what should East bid at (3)? I would never deny a 4 card major in this situation and would bid 3♠. Clearly 4♦ has the obvious drawback that it goes past 3NT (and partner may easily have 4♠'s). If I was either East or West in this auction I would think seriously about bidding 6♦ at (4) or (5) as 5♦ will almost certainly score badly at pairs.

Table B: I mentioned this just last week. If partner opens 2♣ and RHO doubles then you are now under no obligation to make a negative or waiting bid. Simplest is to pass if you would have bid 2♦ without the double. Anyway, no harm was done and East has the same decision at (3). 3♠ is correct.

And what happened? 5♦ made +1 but scored poorly. 3NT was bid 3 times, usually making +2 or +3. The bottom lines. If you or partner has a good hand with a good minor suit (as here), 3NT is often the best contract. Do not go past 3NT without due thought. If opponents double your strongest bid, then pass to show your negative/waiting response.

Don't rebid a 2 card suit!Board 23 from Monday 5th, both vul.

North	South	West	North	East	South(Jeff)
♠ Q104	♠ AJ98	-	-	-	1♣ (1)
♥ A84	♥ QJ75	pass	2NT (2)	pass	3♣ (3)
♦ Q75	♦ A96	pass	3NT (4)	pass	pass
♣ KJ86	♣ 104	pass			

Now this sequence really got West going. West (Chuck) believes that I was hard on him when he psyched twice a few months back, and he tries at every opportunity to accuse me of double standards – so what the hell was South doing here? An outright double psyche??

1♣ at (1) is the short ♣, this is the only hand type when a 1♣ opening is correct with a 2 card suit (4432) when playing the short ♣. It's probably best to alert if you play a short ♣. 2NT at (2) is 11-12 points and denies a 4 card major. So what is this 3♣ bid at (3)? Let's be kind and say that he simply had no idea what he was doing! It is *not* Stayman; partner has *explicitly denied* a 4 card major. This 3♣ bid is usually played as showing a 6 card ♣ suit and a weak hand. With his maximum and excellent ♣'s opposite partner's 6 card suit (ho, ho), 3NT at (4) is very sensible. Some players play that any bid at (3) is forcing and 3♣ may be only 5 cards (but not 2!!!).

Incidentally, I personally prefer to play that pass at (3) is the only weak bid and that any bid at (3) is game forcing, that makes it so much easier to find the best contract.

Sense and (Non)sensibility

Board 4 from Monday 5th, both vul.

Dealer: ♠ J10985
West ♥ 2
Both vul ♦ 53
♣ 87432

♠ 64	N	♠ AK32
♥ Q98653	W E	♥ 104
♦ J876	S	♦ A42
♣ Q		♣ AK96

♠ Q7
♥ AKJ7
♦ KQ109
♣ J105

Table A:

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

Table B:

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

Table C:

West (H)	North	East	South
pass	pass	1♣	1♥
pass (7)	pass	dbl (8)	pass
pass	pass		

Lots of nonsensical bidding here: -

Table A: 1♦ is as silly overcall at (1) on a 4 card suit, what's wrong with 1NT (15-18)? East's 2♠ at (2) is fine as 1♠ would not be forcing, and the 4♥ at (3) is simply good sensible bidding.

Table B: Did you overcall 1NT with hand A at (4) this week? – two players got it wrong on Monday. Anyway, South got this right with a 1NT overcall. And West's pass? I would bid 2♥ at (5), pass seems a bit feeble to me. North's 2♥ at (6) was a transfer to ♠'s and N-S won the hand!

Table C: This South also chose a silly overcall on a 4 card suit, and boy did he pay for it (1100). E-W were playing negative doubles and so West passed at (7) knowing that partner will re-open with a double at (8).

And what happened? 1♥ by South doubled was 1100 to E-W. The more sensible contract of 4♥ by West was reached twice and made exactly, scoring average. The pathetic 'bidding' (or lack of it) of E-W at Table B earned then the bottom, 2♠ was just one down.

The bottom lines. Do not overcall with 4 card suits. Remember the 1NT overcall (15-18 points). Stayman and transfers are still playable after your partner has overcalled with 1NT (systems on). If your partner opens and RHO overcalls 1NT, then a two level bid is weakish (less than 9 points), natural and to play.

Trivial Quiz Spacefiller

1. Which fictional detective said '*One can see by his face that he was stabbed in the back*'?
2. Which is the tallest island in the world?
3. What is the fastest wild land mammal native to the UK?

Answers overleaf.

Making a complete hash of it

Board 3 from Monday 5th, E-W vul.

Dealer: ♠ 10862
West ♥ AJ9
Both vul ♦ 1086
♣ 963

Table A:

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

Table B:

West	North	East	South
1NT (6)	pass	2♥	pass
2♠	pass	3♥ (7)	pass
3NT (8)	pass	4NT (9)	pass
5♦	pass	6♥	pass
6♠	pass	pass	pass

♠ J43 N ♠ AKQ75
♥ K54 W E ♥ Q10732
♦ QJ94 S ♦ A
♣ AK2 ♣ J5
♠ 9
♥ 86
♦ K7532
♣ Q10874

This hand was played 4 times on Monday, with 4 different final contracts.

Table A: West made just 4 bids here, every one was incorrect. At (1) the obvious 1♦ opening is correct. It's not really a major problem if West simply rebids 1NT (12-14) at (2); this jump to 2NT shows 18-19 points as I have repeatedly said in recent news-sheets. 3♥ at (3) is natural and forcing. 3NT at (4) denies 3♠'s. 4♥ at (5) promises at least 5-5 in the majors. Pass at (6) denies 3 cards in either major. West should bid 4♠ here; East would then bid 6♠ which probably makes.

Table B: I don't know what system this pair play, presumably a weak NT? 3♥ at (7) is best played as 5-5 in the majors and game forcing. I don't know if 3NT or 4NT were conventional, I assume they were. Anyway, a reasonable slam was reached.

And what happened? The results were inconclusive as to whether slam was reasonable or not, and also which suit was best. 4♥ and 6♥ both made exactly. 4♠ made plus 2 but 6♠ was minus 1.

The bottom line. Remember your NT bidding. Playing a strong NT: -

- a 1NT opening is 15-17,
- a non-jump rebid in NT is 12-14
- a jump rebid in NT is 18-19
- a 2NT opener is 20-21,

simple, eh?

Trivial Quiz Spacefiller Answers

1. Hercule Poirot – Murder on the Links.
2. New Guinea (it's not Hawaii)
3. The (red) deer.

Don't bid your hand twice

Board 17 from Friday 9th, love all.

Dealer: ♠ KQJ
North ♥ 54
Love all ♦ KQ98
♣ AJ63

♠ 10	N	♠ A97642
♥ AJ10832	W E	♥ 7
♦ 6	S	♦ J107
♣ KQ109		♣ 875
	♠ 853	
	♥ KQ96	
	♦ A5432	
	♣ 2	

Table A:

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

Table B:

West	North	East	South
-	1NT	pass	2♣
2♥ (6)	pass	pass	3♦ (7)
3♥ (8)	dbl (9)	all pass	

'Silly' final contracts were reached at all four tables on Friday, let's have a look at two: -

Table A: This N-S were playing a weak NT, so 1♣ at (1) is correct. East's 2♠ at (2) is a weak jump overcall. Fine. It had made life difficult for South, who elected to bid his 4 card ♥ suit at the 3 level (a negative double is to be preferred). West's double is obvious at (4) as is North's 3NT. Now we come to the silly part, the auction has proceeded favourably for West as he will get the ♥ lead he wants, he should be satisfied. The double at (5) is unwarranted, he hopes to set 3NT (in which case he will get a good board anyway) but there really is no reason why it should not make – N-S have bid freely to 3NT and presumably have the values, partner has shown a weak hand. No need to be greedy.

Table B: After the strong NT opening South obviously starts with Stayman and west makes life awkward for N-S with his 2♥ bid at (6). South had a good long think at (7) – it is difficult, especially for an unfamiliar partnership. He eventually chose 3♦. It would be very difficult for North now – he is not sure which major South has and his bid at (9) is not obvious. No problem, however, when West comes to the rescue by bidding again before North even had to think.

And what happened? Both West's got what they deserved. At Table A 3NT doubled made for 550 to N-S. At Table B 3♥ went 3 down for 500 to N-S. And the other two tables? One was 4♦ by South – see what I mean by it not being obvious for North at (9) if West passes at (8) – (4♦ went one down and scores badly for N-S even if it makes). At the last table South doubled 2♥ at (7) but it made for the top score to E-W.

The bottom lines. Bidding your hand twice makes it easy for the opponents. Do not stick your oar in if the opponents don't know where they are going.

Return to Disneyland

Board 4 from Friday 9th, both vul.

Dealer:	♠ QJ85	
West	♥ KQ2	
Both vul	♦ K	
	♣ K9862	
♠ 1093	N	♠ A74
♥ 1093	W E	♥ AJ8754
♦ Q32	S	♦ 754
♣ 10743		♣ Q
	♠ K62	
	♥ 6	
	♦ AJ10986	
	♣ AJ5	

Table A:

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

Table B:

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

3NT was reached at three tables, it went three down twice and made +2 on the third occasion (well played Jan). Anyway, whether you made 3NT+2 or went 3 off is not the reason that this hand appears in print. I made a comment about the bidding at table A and North (Chuck) said that I was totally wrong and should go back to Disneyland. I said I'd look it up and print it in the news sheet – he said I had no idea what I was talking about and challenged me to do so. I'm sure that Mike and Angela are eagerly awaiting the outcome (they were at the table when this exchange took place). And I'm sure that Angela and Mike will remember the hand and bidding if this North (again) claims that it is not as he remembers it, as when he challenged me last time.

Table A: This pair play 2♦ at (1) as forcing (that's standard). So what should North bid at (2)? Of course 2NT is usually correct with a solid stop – but not if it denies a 4 card major! I said that 2♠ is an alternative, if there is no ♠ fit then bid 3NT next go (South promises another bid). North said, in his normal eloquent manner, that this was utter bull and that a 2♠ bid here is a reverse and shows a big hand. We'll see what the books say and check who's talking bull next.

Table B: This time East made a jump overcall (I don't know if it was meant to be weak or intermediate – I would overcall 1♥). Anyway, I like the 3♥ bid at (3); this denies a ♠ suit (and implies a good long ♦ suit) and asks partner to bid 3NT with a ♥ stop. I say this over and over again, don't bother with minor suits if 3NT is a viable option.

Bidding the Fourth Suit (after LHO opponent's overcall) – is it a reverse?

If the opener would have rebid in another suit in an uncontested auction. He should introduce the same suit in this situation. Inexperienced players often make the mistake of confusing certain completely normal change-of-suit bids with reverses, failing to realise that it is the responder who has driven the bidding to the three level, not the opener.

♠ AQ103	West	North	East	South	I could not find the exact sequence in my library, but this one is close enough. This is hand F and it comes from an Eric Crowhurst book.
♥ 75					
♦ AK1063	1♦	2♣	2♥	pass	
♣ 102	?				

Bid 2♠. This may sound to inexperienced ears like a reverse, but this is clearly wrong. Your intention when you first opened the bidding on this hand was to rebid 1♠ over a response of 1♥; the fact that partner has been forced to respond 2♥ instead of 1♥ does not mean that you should abandon your original plan.

The bottom lines. Now this particular North has asked me not to mention his name in the news sheet (no wonder) and I will accommodate him this once. Normally if somebody openly contradicts me, says I am talking bull, and that I should go back to Disneyland, then I see no reason why I should not name him. Fair enough? *Editor's note – it was Chuck of course.*

Most club members accept that I normally know what I'm talking about when it comes to the bidding.

But just two (Chuck and Hans) are continually trying to catch me out – they’ve been trying for a few years now and have not succeeded yet. Best to tread warily unless you can back up your argument with some expert quotes?

Anyway, as to whether this bid of the 4th suit is a reverse or not after an overcall has been very clearly stated by Crowhurst; it is *not* a reverse if the overcall raised the level of partner’s bid. Apparently it is not just inexperienced players who make this mistake?

For those inexperienced ears – is it a reverse?

Let’s have a look at the sequences from the quiz. Does your 2♠ rebid here show extras?

		you		partner		you	
		↓		↓		↓	
♠ AQ74 ♥ 65 ♦ AQ764 ♣ 764	<u>Sequence J:</u>	1♦	2♣	2♥	pass	2♠?	
							2♠ is fine. It is not a reverse as without intervention it would have gone 1♦ pass 1♥ pass 1♠.
♠ AQ74 ♥ 65 ♦ 764 ♣ AQ764	<u>Sequence K:</u>	1♣	1♥	2♦	pass	2♠?	
							2♠ is fine. It is not a reverse as without intervention it would have gone 1♣ pass 1♦ pass 1♠.
♠ AQ74 ♥ AQ764 ♦ 65 ♣ 764	<u>Sequence L:</u>	1♥	pass	2♦	pass	2♠?	
							2♠ is incorrect here as most people would consider it a reverse. You don’t really want to rebid a 5 card ♥ suit and so have to rebid 2NT (12-14 points) unless that you agree that a reverse does not show extras after a two level response. I think that the latter is very sensible and is what is commonly played by 2/1 players.
♠ AQ74 ♥ AQ764 ♦ 65 ♣ 764	<u>Sequence M:</u>	1♥	2♣	2♦	pass	2♠?	
							2♠ is again incorrect here as most people would consider it a reverse – the level of partner’s response was not affected by the overcall. However, the hand is rather difficult now as you don’t really want to rebid a 5 card ♥ suit and you do not have a ♣ stop for 2NT. I guess that you have to rebid the ♥’s unless you agree that a reverse does not show extras after a two level response. I think that the latter is very sensible but it is not standard and you would have to agree it.

That 3NT rebid yet again

Board 6 from Friday 9th, E-W vul.

North (E) South (G)

♠ A4 ♠ K65
♥ A87643 ♥ K10
♦ 1075 ♦ AQ4
♣ J9 ♣ AK632

Table A:

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

Table B:

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

4♥ is a far better contract than 3NT, so what went wrong at Table A? -

Table A: I've been over this a few times already recently, what is the correct rebid at (1)? 2NT shows 18-19 and a double jump to 3NT shows a long strong minor suit. A typical 3NT bid here would be ♠K65 ♥9 ♦A86 ♣AKQ632, it most certainly does not invite partner to rebid his ♥'s at (2). In this auction North's pass at (2) is correct.

Table B: 2NT is the correct bid at (1). 18-19 points, balanced, at least two cards in partner's suit, and the final strain uncertain. North then has an easy 4♥ bid at (3).

And what happened? 3NT made exactly whereas 4♥ made +2 twice.

The bottom lines. This South hand is a nice 19 points; a 5 card suit headed by the AK is a good plus and I would not argue if you thought that it is worth upgrading. However, the upgrade is not a double jump 3NT rebid. If you feel that this is worth more than a 2NT rebid, then open 2NT. The double jump to 3NT is reserved for a completely different hand type as indicated above.

Bidding Quiz Answers

Hand A: 1NT. 15-18, balanced, with a stop (near enough) in the suit opened. Strictly speaking a 1NT overcall guarantees a stop, but in the case of a ♣ suit by a five card major opener J10x is adequate in my view. It's far better that the alternatives of 1♦, 1♥, double or pass; all of which I think are terrible. But then some people think that I'm terrible.

Hand B: 2♦. There really is no sensible bid if you do not play 4th suit forcing. 3♥ and 3♣ are non-forcing and 4♥ is too unilateral. There may be a slam. Bid 2♦ now and if partner bids 2♠/2NT/3♣/3♦ you then bid 3♥ which is forcing after having invoked the 4th suit.

Hand C: 1♦, and rebid 1NT over 1♥/♠. Trivial I know, but somebody did open 1♣ (and rebid 2NT) on Monday.

Hand D: 3♠. I prefer this to 4♦; I don't like denying a decent 4 card major and 4♦ goes past 3NT which may be the best spot.

Hand E: (a) 4♥. Partner has promised a balanced 18-19 with at least two ♥'s, so bid 4♥.
(b) pass. Partner wants to play in 3NT (he has a good long ♣ suit), so let him.

Hand F: 2♠, simple. This is *not* a reverse. It is partner who has pushed the bidding up to this level and you are simply making your natural rebid at the lowest possible level.

Hand G: Open 1♣, with a view to rebidding 2NT (18-19 pts) over partner's 1♦/♥/♠. If you feel that this hand is a bid good (I won't argue), then open 2NT.

Hand H: 2♥. This is to play and is not forcing. With 9+ pts you would normally double.

Monday 12/4/04

Friday 16/4/04

Friday 23/4/04

1st Jeff/Hans 62%2nd Chuck/Clive 54%1st Einar/Clive 65%2nd Chuck/Terry 60%1st = Einar/Clive 58%1st = Chuck/Terry 58%

A bumper issue this week. I had a day off last Monday and so I did not produce a sheet for last week.

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

Hand A

Hand B

With Hand A RHO opens 2♠! What do you do?

♠ AKQJ84

♠ KJ5

♥ 98

♥ AKQ3

♦ J95

♦ KQ2

♣ A4

♣ A108

With Hand B you open 2NT and partner transfers with 3♥.

You obediently bid 3♠ and partner then bids 3NT. What do you do now?

Hand C

Hand D

With Hand C RHO opens 1♠, what do you bid?

♠ A

♠ QJ

♥ A10

♥ 932

♦ KJ87

♦ AQJ7

♣ AK6532

♣ AQ103

With Hand D RHO opens, what do you bid if he opens: -

(a) 1♣ (or 1♦)?

(b) 1♠ (or 1♥)?

Hand E

Hand F

With hand E LHO opens 1♠ and partner doubles. What is your bid?

♠ K983

♠ K

♥ 765

♥ KJ102

♦ 654

♦ 862

♣ J84

♣ K8652

With hand F partner opens 1♠, what is your response?

Hand G

Hand H

With Hand G partner opens 1♦ and RHO overcalls 1♠. Opponents are vulnerable, you are not. What is your bid?

♠ Q10985

♠ AKJ854

♥ AK

♥ AK84

♦ J72

♦ 6

♣ 875

♣ Q8

With Hand H you open 1♠ and partner respond 1NT. What is your rebid?

Hand K

Hand L

With Hand K you open 1♦ and partner responds 1NT. What do you do?

♠ AJ65

♠ QJ96

♥ KQ82

♥ A

♦ KQ864

♦ KJ943

♣ -

♣ 983

(a) Do you open Hand L in 1st seat?

(b) Suppose that you pass; LHO opens 1♠, partner doubles and RHO passes. What do you do?

A number of people have got this wrong in recent weeks, so let's have a look at how opener should bid balanced hands. We have already seen that an opening 1NT is 15-17 points. So let's clarify what we do with all our balanced hands if outside this range: -

- 12-14 points open 1 of a suit and rebid NT at the lowest level.
- 15-17 points open 1NT
- 18-19 points open 1 of a suit and jump rebid in NT.
- 20-21 points open 2NT
- 22-24 points open 2♣ and rebid 2NT
- 25+ points ...

..... there are various schemes as to what to do with more than 24 points. In simple Standard American you open 2♣ and then jump to an appropriate number of NT's. And, of course, there is always a 3NT opening, but most people reserve this as a *special* opening bid.

All of today's hands are balanced and will normally open or rebid in NT: -

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4	Hand 5
♠ Q65	♠ Q65	♠ Q65	♠ K98	♠ KJ9
♥ J105	♥ KJ5	♥ AQ5	♥ AQ10	♥ AQ10
♦ A875	♦ A875	♦ AJ75	♦ AK75	♦ AKJ5
♣ AQ7	♣ AQ7	♣ AQ7	♣ AQ7	♣ AQ7

1. 14 points. Open 1♦. If partner bids 1♥ or 1♠ then your rebid is 1NT. If partner bids 1NT or 2♦ (6-9) then you pass. If partner bids 2♣ then your rebid is 2NT – this still shows 12-14 points, it is partner who has pushed the bidding up to the two level and he has a good hand (a *good* 10 or more points, usually 11+) which can certainly cope with a 2NT rebid.
2. 16 points. So open 1NT.
3. 19 points. Too good for a 1NT opener but not good enough for 2NT. So with this hand you open 1♦ and then jump in NT. Thus if partner bids 1♥ or 1♠ then your rebid is 2NT. If partner bids 1NT or 2♦ (6-9) then you raise to 3NT. If partner bids 2♣ then your rebid is a jump in NT, so 3NT.
4. 22 points. Open 2NT.
5. 24 points. Open 2♣ and rebid 2NT over partner's 2♦ response.

A couple of points to note. With 12-14 points we rebid 1NT, but if partner has replied at the 2 level, then the rebid is 2NT. And what do we do if partner replies 1NT or 2♦ (our suit)? With 12-14 points we pass, with 18 points we rebid 2NT and with 19 points we rebid 3NT: -

Your point count ↓	Your rebid if partner responds at the 1 level	Your rebid if partner responds at the 2 level	Your rebid if partner responds 1NT or 2♦
12-14 points	1NT	2NT	pass
18 points	2NT	3NT	2NT
19 points	2NT	3NT	3NT

Humble Pie

Remember back in News-sheet 51 we discussed the sequence 1♦ - 1♥ - 3♦ - 3♥?

I said that the last bid was forcing but *everybody* in the club chose to disagree with me, saying it is weak with a 6 card suit. I found a paragraph in an Eric Crowhurst book to support my case but, unbelievably, some people still insist that I'm wrong. Anyway, I was browsing through a recent Marty Bergen book (More Points Smoints) and what did I find on page 53? Why, the *very same* sequence! It is under the title 'Forcing or Not'. So who's side is Marty on? ...

'Forcing. Once responder does not pass opener's invitational jump, the partnership is forced to game'. So, undisputable now, eh? Who's ordering the pies?

Don't hit me with those negative waves

- (Finding and) Losing a 4-4 fit

Board 2 from Friday 9th, N-S vul.

West East (H)

♠ 9 ♠ AKJ854
♥ J1073 ♥ AK84
♦ KJ5 ♦ 6
♣ K10742 ♣ Q8

Table A:

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

Table B:

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

4♥ is a far better contract than 4♠, so what went wrong? -

Table A: So what's with this 4♠ bid at (1)? Should one rebid a 6 card ♠ suit or introduce a 4 card ♥ suit at (1). Actually, expert opinion is divided, and it probably depends upon the quality of the suits. With a reasonable ♥ suit, I would always bid ♥'s. This East hand is good enough to insist upon game and I would bid 3♥ at (1).

Table B: East got this right and bid his ♥'s at (1), so what's with this 4♠ bid at (3)? Apparently East was worried that West may have just 3 ♥'s (2344 or similar shape). I would not worry about it, West may well have 4 or even 5 ♥'s for his bidding, and with the dreaded 2344 or similar shape he would bid 3NT at (2). And West's pass at (4)? I would bid 5♥, but that's because I would take partner's 4♠ as a cue bid (what else can it realistically be?), showing the ♠A, agreeing ♥'s and looking for slam. With no ace to cue, I would thus bid 5♥ at (4). I can see no logic behind bidding 3♥ at (1) and then converting to a natural (to play) 4♠ at (3). Can you?

And what happened? 4♥ was bid just once, ♥'s split 3-2 and it should have made easily. As it happened, declarer lost his way and went one down. 4♠ was either one or two down the *three* (!) times it was bid.

The bottom lines. When you find the good 4-4 fit, don't lose it! And don't worry about partner having a very unlikely distribution – remember Oddball (Donald Sutherland) in Kelly's Heroes? – *'Oh man, don't hit me with those negative waves so early in the morning'*.

The 4-4 fit is all important, it is the gold in Nancy, it is I've said all this before. What's more, it is usually better than a 5-3, 6-2, 6-1, 6-3 or any other fit.

Not convinced? Then just look at the next deal, where the 5-3 fit has better honours than the 4-4 fit but,

4-4 is better than 5-3

Board 10 from Monday 12th

Dealer: ♠ K84
East ♥ J854
both vul ♦ 83
♣ AKJ4

♠ 32 N ♠ J76
♥ AQ2 W E ♥ 73
♦ 97642 S ♦ AKQ105
♣ 1072 ♣ Q53
♠ AQ1095
♥ K1096
♦ J
♣ 986

Table A:

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

Table B:

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

Table A: First of all, do you double or overcall 1♠ with this South hand? It's close, but if you chose to overcall 1♠ then you have to bid the ♥'s later if you have a chance. 3♠ at (2) was invitational, although I prefer to play 3♦ as a sound raise to 3♠ and 3♠ as weakish. But South should bid 4♥ at (3), just in case North has a 4 card ♥ suit also!

Table B: This South chose to double at (1) and it certainly worked out better as the ♥ fit was easily located. West's jump at (4) was weak. At (5) East knew that the opponents had game and so he was always sacrificing in 5♦, but why not try muddying the waters a little with a 4NT Blackwood bid? Who knows, the opponents may then not double? 5♣ at (6) showed 1 key card playing 1430.

And what happened? 5♦ went 2 down, so minus 200. Even if it was doubled it would still be an excellent save against the 620 that the opponents get for 4♥ that probably makes. Unfortunately this fine 5♦ contract scored a cold bottom! Why? Because *every* other table was playing in 4♠, going either 1 or 2 down!

The bottom lines. The 4-4 fit is virtually always better than a 5-3 fit. Just study this hand – it's a perfect example of why. Even with far 'better' ♠'s and two certain ♥ losers, 4♥ still plays better? Why? Because the ♥ losers are there in either contract, but with ♥'s as trumps you can discard losing ♣'s on the long ♠'s and do not need the ♣ finesse. When 5-4 (or especially 4-5) in the majors, consider a double if it may be difficult to bid the other major later.

More Points Smoints – How much is an honour worth?

I am continually saying that point counts need adjusting. Marty Bergen has given a few very good guidelines about honour cards in his recent book: -

1. Subtract one point for each of the following: -
A singleton K, Q or J.
A doubleton KQ, KJ or QJ.
2. Add one point the following: -
Two tens, especially if they are in combination with higher honours in a suit of 4 or more cards.
3. Aces and kings are under-rated, Queens and Jacks are over-rated.

Overcall with a big hand?

Board 14 from Monday 12th, love all.

North (E) South (C)

♠ K983 ♠ A
 ♥ 765 ♥ A10
 ♦ 654 ♦ KJ87
 ♣ J84 ♣ AK6532

Table A:

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

Table B:

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

4♣ is a silly contract, so what went wrong? -

Table A: This 4♣ bid at (1) is incorrect. 4♣ here is pre-emptive, showing a weak hand with an 8 card ♣ suit. Actually, there are a few reasonable alternatives with this hand. You could simply bid 3NT; this promises a stop in the suit bid and a long solid minor, but I would like a better ♣ suit. A 1NT bid is 15-18 but this hand is too good. It's best to start off with a double; if partner bids 2♦ or 2♥ then a 3♣ bid would show a hand too good to simply overcall 2♣ (so 18+ points). However, I think that 2 or 3NT after doubling is OK as you have every suit stopped. The problem with 3♣ is that partner will not bid 3NT without a ♥ stop, and you have the ♥'s stopped. Anyway, it's all academic here as South made a weak bid

Table B: This time South did double, but what about North's 2♣ bid? North has an excellent ♠ stop, so why not 1NT? The problem is that 1NT shows 6-9 points and this hand is too weak. So, when your only suit is the opponent's and you have insufficient values to bid 1NT, bid your cheapest 3 card suit. Thus 2♣ is correct. South, of course, hoped for better ♣'s and obviously bid 3NT at (3).

And what happened? 3NT was bid and made at just this one table. Another pair managed to stop in 2NT and made +1. But two pairs managed to find the silly 4♣ contract (I don't know the bidding at the other table).

The bottom lines. A 4♣/♦ overcall is a weak bid. With a hand too strong to overcall, double first. If you think that 3NT is going to have a shot, don't bid 4♣!

How many points for a negative double?

Board 4 from Friday 6th Jan, both vul.

West East

♠ Q5 ♠ AJ76
 ♥ K764 ♥ 83
 ♦ J985 ♦ Q1042
 ♣ 1073 ♣ AJ2

Remember this deal from news-sheet 67?

West	North	East	South
pass	pass	1♦	1♠
dbl (1)		

What happened? N-S got a good score and West was criticized for making the negative double with just 6 points. I said that West's bid was perfectly correct but a number of club members disagreed, saying that a negative double of 1♠ forces partner to the two level and so needs to have more values. I did not bother to reply at the time, but I have just browsed through 'More Points Smoints' – page 154. Marty Bergen says 'a negative double of 1♠ promises 4 or more ♥'s and 6 or more points. Guess I'm right yet again?

When an opponent bids your suit... Board 9 from Monday 12th, E-W vul.

East (A) This hand is from Monday. RHO dealt and passed at my table. This hand then opened 1♠ and a dodgy 4♠ contract was reached. But at one table

♠ AKQJ84 RHO opened 2♠ (weak) and I was asked what this East hand should do?

♥ 98 Apparently he doubled but ‘unfortunately’ his partner removed the double.

♦ J95 Of course partner will remove the double – it is for take-out and partner

♣ A4 cannot possibly have anything in ♠’s. The opening bid has fixed you; the only thing that you can do is pass. On a good day partner will make a take-out double and then you can pass and thus convert it to penalties.

The bottom lines. This is a virtual quote from news-sheet 74- ‘*When the opponents bid your best suit it may upset you, but think about a pass. Even if they are non-vul you may get a good score*’. Remember that an immediate double is for take-out. And also remember that you have a partner – maybe he will double for take-out.

When an opponent bids your suit... part 2 Board 12 from Friday 23rd

Dealer:	♠ AJ742	<u>Table A:</u>				
West	♥ 9875	West	North	East (G)	South	
N-S vul	♦ K6	1♦	1♠	pass (1)	pass	
	♣ A2	dbl (2)	pass	pass (3)	pass	
♠ 3	N	♠ Q10985	<u>Table B:</u>			
♥ J642	W E	♥ AK	West	North	East	South
♦ AQ1083	S	♦ J72	1♦	1♠	dbl (4)	pass
♣ KQ4		♣ 875	2♥ (5)	pass	3NT	pass
	♠ K6		pass	pass		
	♥ Q103					
	♦ 954					
	♣ J10963					

Table A: E-W were playing negative doubles and so East cannot double at (1) for penalties. When you play negative doubles you have to pass when you hold a penalty hand and wait for partner’s re-opening double. And what should West bid at (2)? He must re-open with a double – just in case partner has a penalty hand. Well bid.

Table B: Not so well bid at this table. East did not have his thinking cap on and incorrectly doubled at (4) although they too were playing negative doubles. When partner bid the obvious 2♥ at (5) he was ‘annoyed’ and so bid a silly 3NT. Down 3 for a deserved bottom.

The bottom lines. Remember that when you play negative doubles then you cannot double for penalties! With a penalty hand you pass and await partner’s re-opening double. Thus, when you are opener and LHO overcalls and partner passes, it is nearly always correct to re-open with a double just in case partner has the penalty hand.

One more point. The 2♥ bid at (5) is not a reverse. It is simply supporting partner who has shown ♥’s with his negative double. I go into this in more detail later in this news-sheet.

Double for penalties with cards in partner's suit?Board 21 from Friday 23rd

Dealer:	♠ K862	West	North	East	South
North	♥ KQJ973				
N-S vul	♦ A63	-	1♥	2♣ (1)	4♥ (2)
	♣ -	dbl (3)	pass	pass	pass

♠ 974	N	♠ AJ5
♥ A2	W E	♥ -
♦ J84	S	♦ K10975
♣ AK875		♣ J10932
	♠ Q103	
	♥ 108654	
	♦ Q2	
	♣ Q64	

4♥ scored 790 for N-S. At another table they got 990 in the same contract. Not very good for E-W when 5♣ doubled made their way at the 3rd table. So what's wrong with E-W's bidding? First of all, what do you do at (1)? Difficult. I guess the options are pass, double, an UNT or overcall with a minor. Nothing is perfect! An UNT would show minor suits like this but partner may have ♠'s and then a ♠ contract would play well. A 2 level overcall is not as bad as some maintained, it should be close to the values of an opening bid and this hand is. I would prefer 2♦ to 2♣. And what about a double? Again, a reasonable option. And pass is also reasonable. It's difficult and I would not argue with anything. The 2♣ overcall chosen is probably the worse choice but it should have worked out very well!

I was South, and you know me. With 10 combined trumps I bid to the limit – so 4♥.

West also knows me, and so knows that I have 5♥'s and so his partner has at most one. So what do you do at (3)? Partner has overcalled at the two level and you have a nice hand. At least, it's a nice hand if playing in ♣'s! In defence it is only one trick. Even though the opponents are vul and you are not, I would bid 5♣. It should go one down, but if the opponents do not find the ♠ switch in time (or lead ♦A or pop up with the ♦A when a ♦ is led by West) then it makes; either way it's better than conceding a huge score defending 4♥ doubled. And if partner really did have a decent 2♣ overcall? Just replace the ♠5 with the ♣Q, then the 2♣ bid is fine and the results would be the same.

At the end of play West criticised his partner's overcall. As I said, it would not be my choice but was not too bad. No, the really poor bid was West's double!

The bottom line? Be wary of doubling opponents with length and strength in partner's suit.

Pass partner's take-out double?Board 14 from Friday 23rd

Dealer:	♠ 84	West	North	East (L)	South
East	♥ K732	-	-	pass (1)	1 ♠
Love all	♦ A106	dbl (2)	pass (3)	pass (4)	pass
	♣ AKJ4				

♠ 52	N	♠ QJ96
♥ J109654	W E	♥ A
♦ 82	S	♦ KJ943
♣ Q107		♣ 983
	♠ AK1073	
	♥ Q8	
	♦ Q75	
	♣ 653	

It's not often that three passes in one auction get a comment from me, but here goes: - First, East's initial pass; it's close, but with two decent suits I would open 1♦ – the hand conforms to the rule of 20. Anyway, pass is not unreasonable, but what about West's double at (2)? Nowhere near good enough and totally wrong shape. You could pass, but a weak jump overcall of 3♥ is perhaps a reasonable alternative non-vul.

North elected to pass the double at (3); I suspect that many players would re-double, as would I. Finally, what about East's 2nd pass at (4)? This converts his partner's take-out into penalties. The trump suit is not good enough sitting under the bidder and I would bid 1NT. 2NT is possible, but it's not quite good enough and I don't really like the singleton ♥A.

Anyway, East's decision to pass opposite West's poor double led to minus 460 and a bad score. Not a complete bottom, as at one other table the score was also 460 (3NT+2).

The bottom lines. Don't double with a 5 card major. Definitely do not double with a 6 card major. Remember the weak jump overcall if you want to bid with hands like this.

Don't pass 1NT with a distributional handBoard 5 from Friday 23rd, N-S vul.

West	East	West	North	East (K)	South
♠ K98	♠ AJ65	-	pass	1♦	pass
♥ 764	♥ KQ82	1NT	pass	pass (1)	pass
♦ J97	♦ KQ864				
♣ A652	♣ -				

1NT is not the best spot, so what went wrong? The opening is correct, as is West's 1NT response, but what should East rebid at (1). You have to think about partner's 1NT bid. It denies 4 cards in either major and so has at least 7 cards in the minors. The hand is a mis-fit unless partner has ♦'s (he probably has at least two); either way, a reverse into 2♥ or 2♠ is unwarranted. Passing 1NT cannot be right with this shape and I would rebid 2♦.

And what happened? 1NT made +2 but it was beaten by 2♦ making +3 at another table. At a third table the contract was 4♥ minus 3; presumably that East reversed into 2♥?

The bottom lines. It is rarely correct to pass partner's 1NT response with a void. Do not reverse with inadequate values. It is OK to rebid a 5 card suit if you know that partner has support (partner's 1NT bid virtually guarantees ♦ support here).

The 5-3 fit is usually better than NT

Board 23 from Monday 12th, both vul.

West East (B)

♠ A10932 ♠ KJ5
♥ 762 ♥ AKQ3
♦ 1097 ♦ KQ2
♣ 96 ♣ A108

Table A:

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

Table B:

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

So what did you bid at (3) with Hand B in this week's quiz? Three out of the four players on Monday got it wrong.

Table A: This was the bidding at 3 tables. Obviously West transfers at (1) and with just a 5 card suit, 3NT at (2) is correct. East's pass at (3) is where it went wrong. With good 3 card support and just one stop in ♣'s, East should prefer the 5-3 fit and bid 4♠.

Table B: This East bid correctly. Not too difficult but good enough to earn a complete top when others do not understand the basics.

What happened? A ♣ was led against 3NT, but fortunately the ♠ Q was onside (with South) and so the contract made +1 when the ♥'s split 3-3. If the ♠ Q was offside then N-S would score four ♣ tricks, ♠ Q and ♦ A for two down. Anyway. E-W were 'lucky' but scored poorly anyway as 11 or 12 tricks are easy in a ♠ contract.

The bottom lines. Remember that a transfer followed by 3NT promises a 5 card suit. The NT opener should normally pass with 2 trumps and convert with 4 trumps. With 3 trumps it is normally best to play in the 5-3-fit, especially if responder is weak. Transfers and Stayman apply after 1NT and 2NT openings.

Raising Partner's Overcall.

Board 1 from Friday 16th, love all

I was partnering Chuck on Friday (yes, I finally got a game in having sat out for weeks). Anyway, Chuck and I play a reasonably sophisticated system and I was asked to explain this sequence: -

North South (me) West North East South
♠ 985 ♠ KQ4 - - 1♣ 1♥
♥ QJ87 ♥ K10965 pass 2♣ (1) pass 2♥
♦ AJ1032 ♦ K pass pass
♣ K ♣ 9432

2♣ at (1) is a bid of the opponent's suit. In this situation it is best to play both 2♥ and 3♥ as weak bids. With a sound raise to 3♥ (i.e. inviting partner to game) or better then bid the opponent's suit.

And what happened? At the two other tables they bid to 3♥; as it happened, the cards behaved and 10 tricks were made on every occasion. But on a different layout it may well be that 2♥ just makes and 3♥ goes one down.

For those inexperienced ears - 'read and weep'

(What is a reverse?)

In last week's news-sheet I gave four sequences about reverses. In particular I said that this sequence was not a reverse and does not show extra values.

	W	N	E	S	W
Sequence J:	1♦	2♣	2♥	pass	2♠?

One distinguished member (Chuck of course) disagrees (I think?) and insisted that I print this article from the ACBL Vol 7 No 11 magazine: -

- ♠ A The hand is from the 'points of view' section and the panel were asked what
- ♥ J643 to bid when the bidding has gone -
- ♦ KQ8752
- ♣ AQ

	W	N	E	S	W
	1♦	pass	1♠	pass	?

Obviously a 2♥ bid now is a reverse (showing extra values), everybody but an absolute beginner knows that. And the panel were split 2-2 as to whether to reverse into 2♥ or to bid 2♦. No problem, and I agree it's close. So why was I asked to reproduce this article? I'm not sure, but I think that the asker believes that the summary made by the mediator is significant? :

'A reverse by opener – a rebid in a new suit that prevents responder from returning to opener's original suit at the two level – promises at least a medium strength hand of about 17-18 points. Most modern partnerships treat opener's reverse as forcing for at least one round. The dilemma faced by our panellists is that this hand has the strength – 16 high card points plus 2 length points for the six card suit – but not the ideal suit quality in ♥'s and ♦'s. That has lead to a split decision about what to rebid.'

Our intrepid distinguished member had scrawled over this – 'Read and weep. This proves my point', and insisted that I reproduce it in full. No problem, I'm always more than willing to reproduce any comments from anybody.

But am I missing something? Perhaps I'm going senile in my old age??

Obviously this is a bog standard reverse. Trivial, even to somebody with my limited intellect. But this has *nothing* to do with sequence J. With sequence J opener was hoping for a sequence like 1♦ - 1♥ - 1♠. An opponent has interfered and *partner* has decided to bid 2♥. It is *partner* who has raise the level to 2♥ with a forcing bid and not you, so a 2♠ bid here (***the cheapest bid possible***) **most definitely** does not show extra values. I will eat my hat (shorts, shirt, shoes etc.) if anybody can find an expert quote that contradicts me here.

I'm bringing some cotton buds and a box of tissues for our distinguished member next week. Perhaps he will be bringing me some Tums?

	you		partner		you
Hand J	↓		↓		↓
♠ AQ74	1♦	pass	2♥	pass	2♠?

♥ 65

♦ AQ764

♣ 764

Consider this sequence. You obviously open 1♦ with a view to rebidding 1♠ if partner responds 1♥. Partner, however, responds with a strong jump shift of 2♥; so what is your bid now? Anybody who does not bid 2♠ because they think that that shows extra values really needs to have some lessons. There simply is no other remotely sensible bid.

The definition of a reverse given in the ACBL article is not applicable when partner has made a strong jump shift. It is also not applicable to interrupted sequences where the opponents have ‘forced’ partner to bid higher than he normally would.

♠ A Let’s take the ACBL hand and change the bidding slightly.

♥ J643

♦ KQ8752

♣ AQ

W	N	E	S	W
1♦	1♠	dbl	pass	?

Partner’s (East) double is negative. What do you bid? 2♥ is woefully inadequate of course. It is *not* a reverse. Partner has promised 4♥’s with his negative double and a 2♥ bid is simply supporting partner at the lowest level possible. I would bid an invitational 3♥. 4♥ or a game forcing 2♠ are possible but I think the hand is not good enough.

Cucumber Sandwiches

Board 13 from Friday 23rd, both vul

Obviously I am apt to reproduce a hand where an observation of mine turns out to be correct. On this occasion by preferred bid would have failed, but I am always fair? N’est pas?

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ K74	♠ AQ5	-	pass	1NT (1)	pass
♥ J764	♥ A4	pass (2)	pass		
♦ A103	♦ KJ952			(1) 12-14	
♣ K106	♣ 842				

The contract made 2 overtricks and there was a discussion about West’s pass at (2). I believe that it is correct. The norm for raising a weak 1NT to 2NT is 11 points; this hand is totally flat (so deduct a point). The only 4 card suit has just one jack and no intermediates (so bad). But the two 10’s are a plus factor. Close, but all in all, I would pass.

East was not happy – he maintains that ‘11 points’ opposite a 1NT opener is 11 points and should raise to 2NT. It would have worked on this deal, but 3NT will only make opposite this West hand if it is super max and the cards behave. How did the cards behave? ♣A was with South. ♦Q was with North (the ‘natural’ way for East to play the suit). Both the ♥K and ♥Q were with South. And every suit broke evenly. South’s natural lead was a ♠ (J109x) which does not hurt East.

So, *everything* (!!!) was correctly placed, East was absolutely max, the lead was OK, yet just 9 tricks were made! I think that my point is proven? This West hand is not usually good enough for a raise to 2NT. If East is min then 2NT will usually go down and if East is max then 3NT will usually go down.

The bottom line. Deduct a point for 4333 type shape. Points belong in long suits.

Body Language

Board 2 from Monday 12th

Dealer: ♠ K1075
East ♥ J54
N-S vul ♦ K1032
♣ K5

♠ 9 N ♠ A86432
♥ A876 W E ♥ KQ10
♦ 9863 S ♦ 4
♣ 8764 ♣ QJ2
♠ QJ
♥ 932
♦ AQJ7
♣ AQ103

Table A:

West	North	East	South (D)
-	-	1♣ (1)	1♦ (2)
pass	2♦	2♠	pass
pass	dbl	all pass	

Table B:

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

Table C:

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

There are a few interesting points on this deal: -

- Table A: This East was unfamiliar with Standard American and incorrectly thought that 1♣ was the opening with this hand type. And what did you do with Hand D at (2) over a 1♣ opening in the quiz? I would bid 1NT (15-18), but 1♦ is not unreasonable. The *only* time when it is acceptable to overcall in a 4 card suit is when it is at the *one* level, is a good suit, and you have length & strength in the suit opened. Anyway, I want to go into the play at this table. What would you lead as South? Partner has supported your ♦'s, but that does not promise the king. South chose the ♥3, with which I totally agree. No problem, except that his partner (North) then made a gesture implying he did not like the lead. This is unethical. Now South obviously then 'knew' that his partner held the ♦K, but when he got in he stoically continued with a ♥ - quite right. You are not allowed to take notice of partner's mannerisms or gestures.
- Table B: Back to the bidding. What did you do with Hand D at (2) over a 1♠ opening in this week's quiz? Now you cannot bid ♦'s as a 4 card suit at the two level is a definite no-no. You have the values for 1NT but have no ♠ stop, so that's out. Double? There was considerable discussion after the session about this. My view is that a double of 1♠ should show 4 ♥'s unless you have adequate compensation. And what is adequate compensation? – an opening hand+ with 3 reasonable ♥'s. And what is reasonable? Up to you, but 932 is not in my opinion! I agree with the pass (but only if your partner understands balancing). But should North pass at (3)? Let's look at Table C: -
- Table C: This South (me) also passed at (2). So what is this 1NT overcall by North at (3) with just 10 points? The answer is that in the balancing seat you do not need the normal 15-18 points for a 1NT overcall. Why? Because you know that partner has some points. The actual range of a 1NT bid in this position is up to the partnership, 10-13, 11-13, 12-14 are all common. Marty Bergen says 10-14 (More Points Smoints). It depends upon your (partner's) style. If partner is likely to pass a 1♠ opening with a poor flat 14-15 points (as I am) then play 10-13/14.

And what happened? 2♠ doubled went two off. 300 to N-S would normally be an excellent score, but two N-S pairs were allowed to make 3NT. And note what I said about this South hand not being that great, even with a combined 26 points 3NT should not make (miserable ♥'s).

The bottom line. It's up to you when you should double 1♠ holding just 3 ♥'s. Here are a few example hands in which I give *my* opinion: -

What to do when RHO opens 1♠

Hand M	Hand N	Hand P	Hand Q	Hand R	Hand D
♠ QJ2	♠ 54	♠ 8	♠ 8	♠ 8	♠ QJ
♥ 93	♥ K84	♥ AJ983	♥ AJ983	♥ AQJ983	♥ 932
♦ AQJ7	♦ AK75	♦ Q95	♦ AJ5	♦ AQ5	♦ AQJ7
♣ AQ103	♣ AJ96	♣ J963	♣ K983	♣ A98	♣ AQ103

M. 1NT. Here you do have a ♠ stop.

N. Double. Now this hand does have adequate compensation. The ♥'s are just about good enough and there are no 'wasted' values in ♠'s.

P. Double. Normally one should overcall with a 5 card suit, but this hand is not good enough to venture to the two level, especially if vulnerable. If partner responds 2♣ or 2♦, then pass. Do not convert to 2♥ as that shows a very good hand (see R).

Q. Bid 2♥. Do not double a major if you have 5 cards in the other major when you have sufficient points to overcall.

R. Double. And then bid 2♥ over a 1NT, 2♣ or 2♦ response from partner. This shows a hand that is too good for a simple 2♥ overcall.

D. Pass. 16 points, but the ♠ QJ doubleton are very poor cards. They are totally useless unless partner has an honour or 10xx, and that is against the odds. The ♥ 932 are also pathetic, it's OK if they were a minor suit, but not in the other major. I would pass the hand and wait for partner's balancing bid. If partner cannot balance than it is unlikely that you have game.

Hand S	Not happy about my pass with hand D? I'm not enthralled with it either, but it's the best of a bad set of choices. And what about this one? Very similar.
♠ QJ	It comes from Marty Bergen's book 'More Points Smoints'
♥ KJ5	With good ♥'s, many people would double (it's a better double than hand D).
♦ KJ65	What does Marty Say? ' <i>Pass. You are not proud of your 3 points in ♠'s and</i>
♣ KJ42	<i>it's not mandatory to overcall just because you have 15 points. Keep quiet.'</i>

And just one final point, compare hands N and S. Hand N is also a Marty Bergen hand (Marty sez vol 2) and Marty sez that '*you should not consider any action other than double*'. And what's the difference? That QJ in the opponent's suit. Put these 3 points somewhere else and action is warranted.

The bottom lines. Cards like QJ doubleton and singleton king are not worth their full value. If they are in RHO's suit, they are much more likely to score in defence rather than offence. On the rare occasions when it's correct to double 1♠ when holding just 3 ♥'s, you need *both* an honour in the ♥ suit *plus* a good hand.

A Poor Slam

Board 14 from Friday 16th, love all

North (F)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ K	♠ AQJ74	-	-	pass	1 ♠
♥ KJ102	♥ 5	pass	2 ♣ (1)	pass	3 ♦ (2)
♦ 862	♦ AQ743	pass	3NT	pass	4 ♦ (3)
♣ K8652	♣ AQ	pass	5 ♦	pass	6 ♦
		all pass			

Obviously a very poor slam, so whose fault?

When playing a strong NT you need 11 points (or a very good 10) to respond in a new suit at the two level. The correct bid at (1) is 1NT. This hand is *not* a good 10 points, a singleton in partner's suit is a bad holding. Now West said 'I didn't bid 1NT because the hand is not balanced'. I've been over this dozens of times, a 1 NT bid over partner's major suit opening does *not* promise a balanced hand; it is often unbalanced, simply showing insufficient points to respond at the two level.

And 3 ♦ at (2)? 2 ♦ is not forcing (unless you play 2/1) and so 3 ♦ is fine. But what about 4 ♦ at (3)? South has already shown a strong two suiter and North has chosen NT's. I would pass. This ♦ suit is nowhere near good enough a suit to suggest slam when partner has promised nothing much in the suit. Anyway, when you remove partner's 3NT at pairs scoring there is little point in playing in 5 ♦ and so the miserable slam was bid.

Fortunately a ♥ was not lead and the ♦K was doubleton onside and so the slam luckily came home.

The bottom line. Playing a strong NT you need 11 points for a new suit at the two level. Don't suggest slam in a suit as poor as AQxxx if partner has not shown anything in the suit.

Bidding Quiz Answers

Hand A: Pass! Double is for take-out.

Hand B: 4 ♠. The 5-3 ♠ fit will play better than 3NT.

Hand C: Double. Too good for 2 ♣ or 1NT.

Hand D: (a) 1NT. 15-18 with a stop. I guess that 1 ♦ is not totally unreasonable over 1 ♣.

(b) Double or pass. It's up to you (and your partner) if you can pass with hands this strong, and what sort of holding you need in the other major when a major is opened and you double. I would pass.

Hand E: 2 ♣. You cheapest 'suit'. Not good enough for 1NT (6-9 pts).

Hand F: 1NT. The hand is not good enough for 2 ♣ unless you play a weak NT.

Hand G: Do you play negative doubles? If not, then double for penalties. If you do play negative doubles then you should pass and await partner's re-opening double.

Hand H: 3 ♥, forcing. Look for the 4-4 ♥ fit.

Hand K: 2 ♦. Partner has denied both majors. He almost certainly has ♦ support and a ♦ contract will play better than NT with a void. 3 ♦ is a reasonable alternative but is usually a 6 card suit. The hand is not good enough to reverse into 2 ♥ or 2 ♠.

Hand L: (a) I would open 1 ♦. At the table this hand chose to pass. Reasonable I guess.

(b) 1NT. I prefer this to 2NT, 2 ♦ or 3 ♦, all of which are quite reasonable options and I will award top marks for any of these bids. The bid I don't like was the one chosen at the table – pass. These ♠'s are not good enough to convert to penalties when sitting under the ♠ bidder.

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.



Club News Sheet – No. 79

7/5/2004



Monday 3/5/04

Friday 7/5/04

1st Hans/Jeff 58%
 2nd Chuck/Ian 57%

1st Dave/Bob 58%
 2nd Clive/Jim 57%

So, the individual who caused millions of dollars of damage with his internet worm was an 18 year old German. Guess they'll give him a slap on the wrist? Since he caused computers in hospitals, police stations, fire stations, even the pentagon etc to shut down then the very minimum is that he should be charged with multiple counts of manslaughter etc. Life in prison is too good for him. That's the only way to deter these cybernet hooligans, agreed? Even if the authorities are too lenient, I guess he'll be slapped with a few million dollar law-suits?

Bidding Quiz

Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A partner opens 1♦, (a) what is your bid? (b) Suppose you choose 1♠, then what after he rebids 1NT? (c) And what would you respond if partner had opened 1NT?
♠ Q9842	♠ AKQ7	
♥ A1032	♥ 9	
♦ K43	♦ K8763	With Hand B you open 1♦ and partner responds 1♠. Absolutely fabulous, but what is your rebid?
♣ 10	♣ 1092	
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C you open 1♦ and partner responds 1♠. Absolutely fabulous, but what is your rebid?
♠ AQ106	♠ A65	
♥ K2	♥ J986	
♦ KQ10643	♦ AQJ	(a) What do you open with Hand D (b) and what would you open if you play a weak NT?
♣ 5	♣ K93	
Hand E	Hand F	With hand E partner opens 1♦, you respond 1♠ and partner bids 4♠. Absolutely fabulous, but do you do?
♠ KJ952	♠ K6	
♥ A10	♥ 8753	
♦ 98	♦ KQJ	With hand F RHO opens 1♦, what do you do?
♣ AJ32	♣ KQJ9	
Hand G	Hand H	What do you open with Hand G?
♠ 96	♠ K95	With Hand H you are playing Acol and partner opens 1♠. (a) Do you respond 1NT or 2♠? (b) Suppose that you bid 2♠. Partner then invites with 3♠, what do you do now?
♥ AKQ8	♥ AJ84	
♦ 764	♦ 752	
♣ AK75	♣ 1075	
Hand J	Hand K	With Hand J you open 1♦ and partner responds 1♥, what is your rebid?
♠ 982	♠ Q10754	
♥ A	♥ 432	With Hand K RHO opens 1♠, you pass and LHO bids 1NT. Your partner doubles (for take-out of ♠'s). What do you do?
♦ AKQJ85	♦ 963	
♣ A102	♣ 104	

Nobody finds the 4-4 fitBoard 26 from Monday 3rd, both vul

North (A)	South (D)	West	North	East	South
♠ Q9842	♠ A65	-	-	pass	1♦ (1)
♥ A1032	♥ J986	pass	1♠ (2)	pass	1NT (3)
♦ K43	♦ AQJ	pass	3NT (4)	all pass	
♣ 10	♣ K93				

3NT is obviously a very poor contract. 4♠ is better but 4♥ is clearly even better. Yet, despite what I say every week, not one of the 4 pairs found the ♥ fit on Monday! – the other three pairs all played in an equally poor 4♠ contract. Let's look at this table: -

- (1) N-S play a weak NT and 5 card majors and so South opened 1♦ with a view to rebidding 1NT (15-16). Now I have given my view on the correct opening when 3-3 in the minors – open 1♣ rather than 1♦. Anyway, that's my advice and some choose to ignore it, fine. But let's look closer at this South hand. How many points is it? 15? I don't think so. It is totally flat (so deduct one point); the only 'suit' is jack high; AQJ in a 3 card suit is not worth 7 points. I would open with a weak NT.
- (2) Anyway, what did you answer to question A(a) this week? The answer is that with 5♠'s and 4♥'s you respond 1♠.
- (3) 1NT (15-16 playing a weak NT) is correct here. You cannot reverse into 2♥ with this shape; for one thing, the reverse guarantees 5♦'s.
- (4) And what was your answer to question A(b) this week? If playing Standard American, partner's 1NT rebid is 12-14. You are not interested in game and the correct bid is 2♥. This is weak and partner should pass or correct to 2♠. The same philosophy is true when you play a weak NT, but now partner's 1NT rebid is 15-16 and so this North hand is good enough to force to game. If you play Checkback or New Minor Forcing then an artificial 2♣ is correct. If you play natural methods then jump to 3♥, forcing.

Now I said that everybody missed the 4♥ game on Monday. So how should the bidding go if South opens 1NT (15-17)? Assuming that North has game forcing values (I think he has opposite a strong NT) there are at least two sensible options: -

Option 1

North	South
-	1NT
2♣	2♥
4♥	pass

Option 2

North	South
-	1NT
2♥	2♠
3♥	4♥

Either option works well with this hand and the 4♥ contract easily reached. So which method is best? Actually I prefer to use Stayman and reserve a transfer sequences for 5-5 hands. But there is a problem or two. If you use Stayman and partner bids 2♦, then what do you do? And how do you show an invitational hand 5-4 or 4-5 in the majors? It gets a bit involved, but there is a solution (it is not Smolen). Have a word with me if you want to know the answer.

And what happened? The 4♠ contract was 2 down and 3NT was 1 down. 4♥ was not bid but is a dodgy contract. I guess it just confirms that this South hand is not worth a strong NT opener and should open a weak 1NT if that's what you play?

So, finally, let's see how the hand should really be bid if you accept my appraisal of the South hand as not being worth 15 points: -

Playing a weak NT

North	South
-	1NT
2♣	2♥
pass	

Playing a strong NT

North	South
-	1♣
1♠	1NT
2♥	pass

Easy, eh? Funny how everybody was in a hopeless game and nobody even found the ♥ fit! When will people realise that I am right about deducting a point for 4333 type shape? And that I am equally right in saying to look for the golden 4-4 fit? Maybe after a year or two or ?

That 3NT rebid yet, yet, again

Board 22 from Monday 3rd, E-W vul

West	East
♠ K73	♠ 982
♥ K653	♥ A
♦ 72	♦ AKQJ85
♣ J754	♣ A102

<u>Table A</u>			
West	North	East (J)	South
-	-	1♦	pass
1♥	pass	3♦ (1)	pass
3NT (2)	pass	pass	pass

<u>Table B</u>			
West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	pass
1♥	pass	3♣ (1)	pass
pass (2)	pass		

<u>Table C</u>			
West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	pass
1♥	pass	2NT (1)	pass
3NT	pass		

The first two bids are obvious, but I don't like the subsequent sequences at any of the tables!

Table A: 3♦ is not forcing. I've been over this a number of times; with a good minor suit, think NT! The correct bid at (1) is 3NT. Lucky that West had enough for 3NT at (2).

Table B: Now this East got it partially right. He realised that his hand was worth game but for some reason decided to pull out the 3♣ card. Very occasionally it may be correct to 'dig up a forcing minor', but that is when you have bid a major suit. As I said, 3NT is correct here. And what can we say about West's pass at (2) of his partner's game forcing bid? I guess that if you have absolutely no confidence in partner there is a case for it, but I would bid 3NT anyway. If partner really has no clue, then at least the correct man is declarer? It's an established Hideous Hog tactic – bid 3NT.

Table C: The 2NT rebid at (1) is 18-19 points. But as I have said before, with a long solid suit bid 3NT. This hand has 8 tricks and you need virtually nothing from partner to make 3NT. If you think that ♦AKQJ in a 4 card suit is worth 10 points and ♦AKQJxx is also 10 points then you need to go back to school. Points smoints.

And what happened? 3NT made or made +1. 3♣ did not fare well (it went down) and at the 4th table 3♦ at (1) was passed out!

The bottom lines. Re-read the numerous news-sheets where I have explained the 3NT rebid. Do not make a non-forcing (2NT or 3♦) rebid if you have 8 tricks in your hand! Do not bid a silly 3♣ with a 3 card suit if 3NT is where you want to play.

No Sensible bid? – part 1

Board 12 from Monday 3rd

Dealer: ♠ 8
South ♥ KQ94
N-S vul ♦ A10962
♣ A32

♠ J10752	N	♠ K6
♥ J6	W E	♥ 8753
♦ 7543	S	♦ KQJ
♣ 65		♣ KQJ9

♠ AQ942
♥ A102
♦ 8
♣ 10874

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

West has no sensible bid at (3),
what was the cause of his dilemma?

So what did you bid with Hand F at (1) in this week's quiz? A double of 1♦ is a very poor bid with such pathetic majors. Pass or 1NT are the only sensible bids. Everything worked out OK however up until East's double at (2). This was apparently for penalties and should show a hand that was too strong to overcall 1NT directly, so 19+. Quite why East thought that he could set 1NT is beyond me (it made plus two when bid a two other tables). Many would play that a double at (2) shows an enormous red two-suiter; clearly this hand qualifies for neither. Anyway, West is in a real spot at (3) as his only two suits have been bid by the opposition. He knew his partner and correctly thought that East did not have his bid. Eventually he decided upon 2♠ and luckily his partner finally realised that he had a pass card in his bidding box. Quite why South did not double at (4) is a mystery, perhaps he is not used to bidding like this and thought that East actually had a decent hand? 2♠ by West went two down.

No Sensible bid? – part 2

Board 3 from Monday 3rd, E-W vul

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ QJ85	♠ 96	-	-	-	pass
♥ -	♥ AKQ8	pass	pass	1♣ (1)	pass
♦ AJ832	♦ 764	1♦ (2)	pass	1♥ (3)	pass
♣ 10943	♣ AK75	1♠ (4)	pass	1NT (5)	pass
		2♣ (6)	pass	3NT (7)	all pass

East has no sensible bid at (5), what was the cause of his dilemma?

So what would you open with this East hand? This auction got messy because East failed to open 1NT. 1♦ at (2) is fairly obvious although a few players will bid a 4 card major in preference to a ♦ suit with a weak hand. That is ‘Walsh’ and is best left to experienced pairs who know the treatment. Standard is to bid up the line, so 1♦ is fine (and is what most players at the club would bid – I asked). 1♥ at (3) is obvious as is 1♠ at (4). This is the 4th suit but is best played as natural in this one sequence (so a jump to 2♠ would be 4th suit forcing). Anyway, what does East bid now at (5)? 1NT shows 12-14 (just the same as if it had gone 1♣ - 1♠) and 2NT shows 18-19. That’s why you have to open 1NT. Anyway, East decided on 1NT and luckily West had the shape to pull it to 2♣. 3NT at (7) was silly of course but luckily partner had a decent hand and it made +1.

And how should the bidding go? How about: 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2NT - 3NT. Simple, eh?_

When I asked at the club I could not find a single person who would open the East hand with 1NT, they all said that they would not open with 1NT with two weak suits. Only one of them even thought about the impossible rebid problem – he said that he would reverse into 2♥ over a 1♠ response but agreed that he was fixed over 1♦._

For me it’s easy – with a balanced hand in the middle of your 1NT opening range – open 1NT.

5-3 fit or NT?

Board 6 from Friday 7th, E-W vul

North (H)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ K95	♠ Q8642	-	-	pass	1♠
♥ AJ84	♥ Q6	pass	2♠ (1)	pass	3♠ (2)
♦ 752	♦ AK9	pass	3NT (3)	pass	pass (4)
♣ 1075	♣ AK9	pass			

4♠ went 3 down and 2♠ just made at other tables and I was asked how 3NT was reached. Playing 5 card majors 2♠ is obvious at (1). This N-S pair were playing 4 card majors and it's not so obvious, either 2♠ or 1NT could work out best. This is just one reason why I don't like 4 card majors. Anyway, I was North and decided upon 2♠.

South's 3♠ is invitational, and since we are playing 4 card majors it promises a 5 card suit. So what did you bid with Hand H at (3) in this week's quiz? I asked around on Friday and got answers of pass, 4♥ and 4♠.

So pass? A totally flat hand with no ruffing potential, so certainly a sound option.

And 4♥? It is often best to introduce a 4 card ♥ suit when you know of a 5-3 ♠ fit just in case there is a superior 4-4 ♥ fit. But in this auction it is South who would have introduced a 4 card ♥ suit at (2) if she had one. So 4♥ at (3) is unnecessary.

And 4♠? Reasonable, and the best contract if partner has 6 ♠'s or good ♠'s. But does she?

I bid 3NT. This shows that the original support was just 3 card and offers partner the choice of contract. It also implies 3433, 3343 or 3334 shape as with ruffing potential the 5-3 fit is usually best. Some members said that they did not like the bid with two weak suits. I think that with this North hand it looks like 9 tricks will be easier than 10. Partner has promised around 17-18 points and will likely have both minors stopped.

With weak ♠'s and oodles of points outside, South was happy to pass 3NT at (4).

And what happened? 3NT was the best contract and made +1.

A splinter anyone?

Board 17 from Monday 3rd, love all

West (E)	East (C)	West	North	East	South
♠ KJ952	♠ AQ106	-	pass	1♦	pass
♥ A10	♥ K2	1♠	pass	4♠ (1)	pass
♦ 98	♦ KQ10643	pass (2)	pass		
♣ AJ32	♣ 5				

This was one auction that I witnessed, a good slam was missed. Some might say that this East hand is not worth game and that 3♠ is sufficient. And me?

I think it is worth game but that a 4♣ splinter at (1) is the bid (much more descriptive than 4♠). But should West bid on over partner's 4♠ bid in this auction? The 4♠ bid at (1) usually shows about 18-19 points and 4 card support; with a decent 13 points, good intermediates, two aces and, most importantly, a respectable 5 card ♠ suit, I would investigate slam.

My opinion? If it's worth anything (my opinion, that is): -

(1) I would splinter with 4♣ at (1) and

(2) In this actual auction I would bid 5♣ (cue bid, looking for slam) at (2). Partner has said that he is prepared to play in 4♠ opposite a minimal response – say a 6 count with a 4 card ♠ suit. This West hand is certainly more than that (!!) and is most definitely worth a slam try. Take away the two aces and this hand should still respond 1♠. Pass here is a very poor bid.

And what happened? 6♠ was cold. Just one pair bid it but I don't know their auction.

Worth a jump raise?

Board 4 from Monday 3rd, both vul

West (B)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ AKQ7	♠ 10854	1♦	pass	1♠	pass
♥ 9	♥ Q74	3♠ (1)	pass	4♠	pass
♦ K8763	♦ A4	pass	pass		
♣ 1092	♣ A763				

This was the bidding at two tables on Monday, the game went one down on both occasions. Anything wrong with the bidding?

Yes. This West hand is not worth a jump raise. 12 points, so a simple raise. Now you will read in some books to add on for shortage (some say 1 for a doubleton, 3! for a singleton and 5!! for a void). Sometimes this works, but it is optimistic, especially if partner has strength in your short suit. If this west hand had about 3 or 4 more points then a splinter (3♥) would be in order, but with this minimal hand 2♠ is just fine. My opinion is that you should only add on oodles for a shortage if you *know* that it is useful. If opponents have bid the suit it usually is. Otherwise splinter with game values and let partner judge whether to push on.

Bid a 3 card suit when partner doubles for take-out? – part 1Board 9 from Friday 7th

Dealer:	♠ AK832	West	North	East (K)	South
North	♥ 106				
E-W vul	♦ K7	-	1♠	pass	1NT
	♣ AQJ5	dbl (1)	pass	2♠ (2)	pass
		3♥	dbl	all pass	
♠ 6	N	♠ Q10754			
♥ AKQ87	W E	♥ 432			
♦ AQ108	S	♦ 963			
♣ 976		♣ 104			
	♠ J9				
	♥ J95				
	♦ J542				
	♣ K832				

3♥ was too high, going down vulnerable so 200 away when other N-S's were playing peacefully in part-scores. Anyone to blame?

The first two bids were obvious, so what about West's double at (1)? I guess that many would, but I prefer to overcall with a good 5 card major and I would bid 2♥. And East's 2♠ bid at (2)? A 5 card suit so bid it? Unfortunately you cannot! East is in a bit of a spot after partner's double as his only suit is the opponent's. In these situations when you have insufficient values for 1NT (6-9 points) you simply have to bid a 3 card suit; 2♦ is correct. The 5-3 ♥ fit is superior of course, especially at pairs scoring, that's just one reason why I would overcall 2♥ at (1).

Bid a 3 card suit when partner doubles for take-out? – part 2Board 13 from Friday 7th

Dealer:	♠ AQJ932	West	North	East	South
North	♥ 62				
both vul	♦ 3	-	1♠ (1)	dbl (2)	1NT
	♣ Q763	2♥ (3)	pass	4♥	all pass

♠ 1076	N	♠ 84
♥ 985	W E	♥ AKQ4
♦ AJ965	S	♦ Q8
♣ J2		♣ AK1094
	♠ K5	
	♥ J1073	
	♦ K10742	
	♣ 85	

4♥ is actually a reasonable contract, but the bidding was not.

N-S were playing strong twos and so North, unable to open a weak 2♠, elected to open with 1♠ at (1). East has a strong hand and dbl at (2) is fine. Exactly why West chose to bid a 3 card suit headed by the 9 at (3) will remain a mystery. Either pass or 2♦ are the sensible bids. Perhaps he wanted to demonstrate his prowess as declarer? East's raise to 4♥ opposite a free bid is obvious.

Anyway, it should have turned out very well; North did not fancy a ♠ lead from the AQ and so chose his singleton ♦3, to ♦ Q, K and A. West then decided to lead the ♣J and let it run; perhaps dubious in light of South's 1NT bid? Anyway, it held and a 2nd ♣ to the ♣9 also held.

This is the position after trick 3.

♠ 1076	N	♠ 84	
♥ 985	W E	♥ AKQ4	The lead is in dummy (East).
♦ J965	S	♦ 8	E-W have 3 tricks in the bag,
♣ -		♣ AK10	how do you continue?

Things have gone remarkably well for declarer; the ♣ suit is set up and he has not been forced with ♠'s. All he has to do now is lead 3 rounds of trumps and then play ♣'s, 10 tricks are easy provided that trumps are no worse than 4-2. If trumps split 3-3 then there are even 12 tricks if you read the ♦3 lead as a singleton or doubleton (what else can it realistically be after South turned up with the king?), but no need to be greedy when game is safe (+1 if trumps split). Instead of counting his tricks, West decided to lead ♦8 from dummy at trick 4 and go two down. Majestically converting 10 tricks into 8 and a clear top into a clear bottom as nobody else was in game.

Moysian fits (4-3) can be tricky for the inexperienced player; you can normally only afford to ruff in the short hand. Also, if the trumps are divided 4-2 (most likely), then it's often best to draw just 3 rounds and then run side suit winners.

The bottom lines? Don't bid a 3 card suit if you have a sensible alternative (a lower ranking 5 card suit is certainly an alternative!). Count your tricks.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: (a) bid 1♠ over partner's opening 1♦
(b) then if he rebids 1NT (12-14) bid 2♥. This is a weak bid, showing 5♠'s and 4♥'s. Partner should pass or correct to 2♠.
(c) This hand is game forcing opposite a 15-17 1NT opener. It's up to you how you deal with these 5-4 in the major hands. One popular method is to bid Stayman and then jump to 3 of your longer major if partner responds 2♦. Another method is to transfer into the 5 carder and then rebid the 4 carder. Neither is totally satisfactory and I have an intermediate/advanced book covering this topic if you want to borrow it.
- Hand B: 2♠. You like partner's bid but you still only have 12 points. Your ♥ shortage may or may not be of significance. You certainly are not strong enough for a forcing 3♥ splinter. You are also not strong enough for an invitational 3♠.
- Hand C: 4♣. This hand is far better than Hand B. A pessimistic 3♠ or a more sensible 4♠ are alternatives, but I like the 4♣ splinter. Game forcing and shortage in ♣'s.
- Hand D: (a) 1♣. The hand is not worth 15 points and in my opinion is not worthy of a 1NT opener. And I always open 1♣ in preference to 1♦ when 3-3 in the minors.
(b) 1NT. It's not worth 15 points, so a weak 1NT (12-14), simple.
- Hand E: 5♣ or perhaps 4NT. Look for slam. Partner's 4♠ bid is strong, usually around 18 points (or a bit less with distribution). So 4NT (Blackwood) is reasonable, but I prefer a 5♣ cuebid as bidding Blackwood with a weak doubleton is not recommended. Pass, with this monster containing a 5 card trump suit and two aces is pathetic, but was the bid chosen by an experienced player on Monday.
- Hand F: 1NT (15-18) or pass. It is borderline if this hand is good enough for a 1NT overcall and many would pass. I would bid 1NT but not argue with pass, but do **not** double. With just two ♠'s and 4 miserable ♥'s, double is a terrible bid.
- Hand G: 1NT. A balanced 16 count. If you open 1♣ and partner rebids 1♠ (or if it goes 1♣ - 1♦ - 1♥ - 1♠) then you have no rebid as 1NT shows 12-14 points and 2NT shows 18-19. Now one or two (?) of the clubs top players may disagree, but what is the rebid over partner's 1♠ if you open 1♣. Lying by two points with a 1NT or 2NT rebid is not an option for me and you have no 5 card suit to rebid.
- Hand H: (a) Either 1NT or 2♠ could work out best. That's why I prefer to play 5 card majors
(b) It's close between passing and bidding game. Partner's 3♠ bid only shows 5♠'s playing Acol and the fact that she did not make a help-suit game try implies poor trumps with no particular weakness in any outside suit. The game try should be around 17-18 points and I believe that 3NT is a better bid than 4♠ with this flat hand. Some may (did) say that they don't like it with 2 weak suits, but with around 17-18 points partner probably has them covered. With an unsuitable hand partner will always correct to 4♠.
- Hand J: 3NT. A good hand with a good long suit.
- Hand K: 2♦ or 2♥. Horrible I know, but these are the only other alternative. I prefer 2♦ as this is less likely to get partner excited. You cannot pass or bid 2♠. When your only suit are the enemy's you sometimes have to bid a 3 card suit in response to partner's take-out double.

Monday 10/5/04

Friday 14/5/04

1st Kenneth/David 64%
 2nd Chuck/Hans 58%

1st Kenneth/Chuck 64%
 2nd = Ian/Tomas 56%
 2nd = Dave/Bob 56%

Well done Kenneth, the first double-header for a while. Mind you, you will be docked a few points if your Monday partner opens 3♣ on a hand like Hand D again.

The recent election in India has been heralded as a great achievement. Perhaps they will lend out their electronic voting machines to countrie(s) that have problems counting votes?

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

Hand A

Hand B

♠ 9752
 ♥ Q42
 ♦ Q72
 ♣ K92

♠ KJ104
 ♥ K76
 ♦ Q107
 ♣ J102

With Hand A partner opens 1♣, what do you respond?

With Hand B partner opens 2NT, what do you respond?

Hand C

Hand D

♠ KQ1092
 ♥ Q10
 ♦ J6
 ♣ KQ32

♠ K8
 ♥ -
 ♦ 10862
 ♣ AKQJ9872

With hand C RHO opens 1♥, what do you bid?

What do you open with Hand D?

Hand E

Hand F

♠ A10964
 ♥ AK5
 ♦ AKQJ
 ♣ K

♠ KQJ1074
 ♥ KQ9
 ♦ -
 ♣ KJ108

What do you open with Hand E?

With hand F you open 1♠ and partner responds 1NT.

(a) what is your rebid

(b) suppose that you choose 3♣, then what do you do when partner bids 3♦?

Hand G

Hand H

♠ A74
 ♥ KQ9
 ♦ K9
 ♣ KQJ95

♠ AJ5
 ♥ Q8
 ♦ KQJ
 ♣ AJ964

What do you open with hand G?

What do you open with hand H?

Hand J

Hand K

♠ A2
 ♥ 10976
 ♦ AJ
 ♣ AJ752

♠ 109
 ♥ AKJ3
 ♦ A942
 ♣ K103

With Hand J partner opens 1♣ and you respond 1♥. Partner then bids 1NT (12-14), what do you do?

With hand K partner opens 1♣ and you respond 1♦ or maybe 1♥. Partner then bids 2NT (18-19 balanced, no 4 card major).
 What do you do?

Deny a 4 card major? – part 1Board 3 from Monday 10th, E-W vul

North (A)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ 9752	♠ 104	-	-	-	1♣
♥ Q42	♥ AK93	pass	1NT (1)	all pass	
♦ Q72	♦ J54				
♣ K92	♣ AQ76				

1NT by North made but scored a joint bottom, it is usually best for the stronger hand to be declarer. So, anything wrong with the bidding?

Yes. One should never deny a 4 card major and North should bid 1♠ at (1). Maybe not so important on this particular deal, but 1NT is a disaster if South has 4♠'s and less than 17 points, when he will pass 1NT and you miss the fit. Why did South bid 1NT? He said *'I thought it more important to show my balanced 7 points that to bid my poor 4 card major'*. This view is totally against the philosophy of natural type systems such as Standard American and Acol. If you want to show points instead of (major) suits, then take up Precision ♣.

Deny a 4 card major? – part 2Board 21 from Monday 10th, N-S vul

West	East (B)	<u>Table A</u>			
♠ AQ983	♠ KJ104	West	North	East	South
♥ A983	♥ K76	-	pass	pass	pass
♦ A9	♦ Q107	2NT (1)	pass	3NT (2)	all pass
♣ AK	♣ J102	<u>Table B</u>			
		West	North	East	South
		-	pass	pass	pass
		2NT	pass	3♣ (2)	pass
		3♥ (3)	pass	3NT (4)	pass
		4♠ (5)	pass	pass (6)	pass

A silly 3NT was bid at table A (4♠ is a far better contract), so who's to blame?

Table A: So is it the opening bid that's wrong? With 9 cards in the majors one should never open 1NT, but 2NT is different. A 1♠ opening may mean missing game if partner cannot respond and so 2NT is the correct opening. So why didn't East bid Stayman at (2)? Perhaps he has been reading one of those silly books that says don't bid Stayman when 4333 or 3433? The bin is where they (those books) belong. With a good suit like this ♠ suit one must look for the fit.

Table B: This is more like it. East bids Stayman at (2) but with which suit does West respond at (3)? Actually it does not matter, the ♠ fit is always found. 3NT at (4) guarantees a 4 card ♠ suit and so West corrects at (5). East is close to looking for slam but with the totally flat shape I think that pass at (6) is fine.

And what happened? Silly contracts of 3NT (+1) and 6NT (-1) were reached at two tables. 6♠ was bid and made once and 4♠ & 5♠ made 11 tricks at the other tables.

The bottom lines. Never deny a 4 card major. Stayman applies over 2NT as well as 1NT openings. If you have a good 4-4 (or 5-4) fit it is usually better than NT.

A sound Pre-empt?

Board 22 from Monday 10th,

Dealer:	♠ 952	West	North	East (D)	South
East	♥ A6				
E-W vul	♦ AKQ873	-	-	3NT (1)	pass
	♣ 104	pass (2)	pass		

♠ A1064	N	♠ K8
♥ Q9432	W E	♥ -
♦ 6	S	♦ 10862
♣ 653		♣ AKQJ9872
	♠ QJ73	
	♥ KJ10875	
	♦ J94	
	♣ -	

3NT is obviously a silly contract that went 4 down, let's look at the bidding: -

So what did you open with Hand D in this week's quiz? If you play the gambling 3NT that would be an option, except that most players insist on nothing outside and a king is too much (certainly in my preferred style). Now presumably this pair had not discussed it, and I happen to know that this West does not like the gambling 3NT and plays an opening 3NT as 25+ points. So what's with his pass at (2)?

If East's 3NT was 25+ (I don't like this either) then obviously West should bid Stayman or transfer (it's a bit of a mess as there is little room, that's why a strong opening 3NT is silly). Anyway, slam is in the air. If East's 3NT is the gambling variety then you have to bid 4♣ when you do not have stoppers in 3 suits. Partner will then pass or correct to 4♦. Either way, West should bid 4♣ and he got what he asked for with his pass (a miserable score).

So what should East open? The hand is close to a 2♣ opener but 1♣ is really the best bid. Two (!!) players chose to open 3♣ on Monday. This is ridiculous and I will award adjusted (unfavourable) scores in future for atrocious bids like this. Anybody who thinks that the East hand is weak (a 3♣ pre-empt) really needs to go back to the pre-beginner's school. A 9 playing trick hand with 8 solid tricks off the top is not generally considered to be weak.

And what happened? What a mixed bag of results! 4♠ by West went 5 down, 4♠ by South went 3 down (quite how both sides can reach a silly 4♠ contract is beyond me) and 5♣ was bid twice, making 11 and 12 tricks (doubled) resp.

As you can see, 5♣ is a good contract and can only be beaten with an initial ♣ lead. As South was void in ♣'s it was cold; but I guess it's more fun to go 4 down in 3NT?

A word about the gambling 3NT. This is a 3NT opening bid with a long solid minor suit. Some play that the hand contains no outside ace or king, others allow one outside king. The former approach is much sounder and is what most experts play, if opener may or may not have something outside then responder has no clue what to do when he has a few bits and pieces. This hand is a perfect example, 5♣ is cold because responder's ♠ A is an important card, it would not be if opener did not have the king.

The bottom lines. I keep on saying that 3NT is usually better than 5 of a minor, but not when you have **two** suits without a semblance of a stop between them! If you want to play the gambling 3NT, then play the variation with nothing outside. Responder should then know to bid 4♣ when he does not have 3 suits stopped.

A strong opener?Board 11 from Monday 10th, love all

North	South	West	North	East	South (E)
♠ K72	♠ A10964	-	-	-	2♣ (1)
♥ 9732	♥ AK5	pass	2♦ (2)	pass	2♠ (3)
♦ 102	♦ AKQJ	pass	4♠ (4)		
♣ J987	♣ K				

A comfortable contract making an overtrick, but 2 pairs failed to reach game on Monday. Why? Because they did not open with a strong bid. Playing strong twos I would open 2♠ (via 2♣ if playing Benjamin). Playing weak twos then I would open 2♣, the hand is too strong for a 1♠ opening. In this actual auction 2♣ (1) was 23+ or game forcing; 2♦ (2) was negative/waiting; 2♠ (3) was game forcing and 4♠ (4) was weak (fast arrival).

The bottom line. If just one card in partner's hand is sufficient to make game a good prospect then open with a strong bid. With this South hand, either the ♠K or the ♣A opposite would usually be sufficient for game.

Don't open 1NT out-of-rangeBoard 4 from Monday 10th, both vul

West	East (G)	<u>Table A</u>			
		West	North	East	South
♠ 65	♠ A74	pass	pass	1NT (1)	pass
♥ 8732	♥ KQ9	pass (2)	pass		
♦ A107	♦ K9				
♣ A863	♣ KQJ95				
		<u>Table B</u>			
		West	North	East	South
		pass	pass	1♣ (1)	pass
		1♥ (3)	pass	2NT (4)	pass
		3NT	pass	pass	pass

E-W missed a good game at table A, what went wrong?

Table A: It's the usual suspect, a 1NT opening out of range. This East hand is far too good for a 1NT opening. 18 points is one too many, but perhaps even more important is the decent 5 card suit.

And West's pass at (2)? West has 2 good cards and 11 bad ones. With two poor 4 card suits and little in the way of intermediates a pass of a 15-17 NT would be the choice of many. Reasonable, although many would make an effort.

Table B: Now this is how it should be bid. 1♥ at (3) is correct, never deny a 4 card major, even a poor one. The 2NT rebid at (4) shows a balanced 18-19 points and so West has a comfortable raise to 3NT.

What happened? This sequence at Table B should be automatic, but only one pair out of 5 found it. 3 pairs were in silly part-scores and one pair played in an equally silly 4♥.

The bottom lines. The obvious one first, do not open 1NT with a good 18 points. Remember that a jump rebid in NT is the way to show a balanced 18-19 points.

Is 4NT natural or ace-ask?

Board 13 from Monday 10th, both vul

West (K)	East (H)	<u>Table A</u>			
		West	North	East	South
♠ 109	♠ AJ5	-	pass	1NT (1)	pass
♥ AKJ3	♥ Q8	2♣	pass	2♦	pass
♦ A942	♦ KQJ	3NT (2)	all pass		
♣ K103	♣ AJ964				

<u>Table B</u>					
		West	North	East	South
		-	pass	1♣ (1)	pass
		1♥	pass	2NT (3)	pass
		4NT (4)	pass	6NT (5)	pass

E-W missed a good slam at table A, what went wrong?

Table A: It's the usual suspect, a 1NT opening out of range. This East hand is far too good for a 1NT opening. 18 points is one too many, but perhaps even more important is the decent 5 card suit. Think I've said all this before? Groundhog day.

After a 1NT (15-17) opening the West hand is borderline as to whether to look for slam or not. 3NT at (2) is quite reasonable with no fit or long suit.

Table B: Now this is how it should be bid. The 2NT rebid at (3) shows a balanced 18-19 points. West then knows that there are 33-34 points, but with a flat hand and no fit, the West hand is marginal as to whether it should launch into slam or simply invite. I would invite, and the invitational bid for 6NT is 4NT. 4NT over partner's 1NT, 2NT or 3NT is always an invitational raise, looking for 6NT.

Should East accept? Just 18 points, but this hand is *not* minimum. The decent 5 card suit is worth more than an extra point and East correctly accepted.

What happened? 6NT was bid twice but three pairs stopped in 3NT. 12 or 13 tricks were made on every occasion.

The bottom line. The obvious one, do **not** open 1NT with a good 18 points.

And a word about Blackwood, Gerber and an invitational 4NT. Now you can play whatever you want, but this is a recommended simple approach: -

4♣ is always Gerber after partner's last natural bid was 1NT or 2NT, even if ♣'s have been bid naturally before. Examples: -

1NT - 4♣; 1♣ - 1♥ - 1NT - 4♣; 2NT - 4♣; 1♥ - 1♠ - 2NT - 4♣

Thus a 4NT bid in these situations is quantitative, looking for slam: -

1NT - 4NT; 1♣ - 1♥ - 1NT - 4NT; 2NT - 4NT; 1♥ - 1♠ - 2NT - 4NT

If partner's last bid was 3NT, then 4NT is still a quantitative raise. In this situation, if you want to ask for aces then 5♣ is Gerber, Gerber is always a *jump* in ♣'s. Examples (3NT here shows 18-19 points):

-

1♥ - 2♣ - 3NT - 4NT	4NT is a quantitative raise
1♥ - 2♣ - 3NT - 4♣	4♣ is natural and forcing
1♥ - 2♣ - 3NT - 5♣	5♣ is a jump in ♣'s and so is Gerber.

NT is usually better than a minor.Board 24 from Monday 10th, love all

West	East (J)	<u>Table A</u>			
		West	North	East	South
♠ K95	♠ A2	1♣	pass	1♥	pass
♥ A32	♥ 10976	1NT	pass	3♣ (1)	all pass
♦ K85	♦ AJ				
♣ K864	♣ AJ752				

<u>Table B</u>					
West	North	East	South		
1♣	pass	1♥	pass		
1NT	pass	5♣ (1)	all pass		

<u>Table C</u>					
West	North	East	South		
1♣	pass	1♥	pass		
1NT	pass	3NT (1)	all pass		

E-W missed a good 3NT contract at tables A and B, what went wrong?

Table A: With two doubletons East decided that he did not like NT. He thus supported partner, but unfortunately partner passed. 3♣ here is only invitational, and if you play Checkback Stayman it is weak.

Table B: This East had a similar dislike for NT. With game going values (a combined 26-28 points) and a fit, he jumped to the ♣ game. Reasonable?
No! You need around 25 points for game, but that is 4 of a major or 3NT. To make 5 of a minor you need more, around 29.

Table C: Finally somebody got it right. With adequate points and aces in both of the unbid suits 3NT is clearly the bid at (1).

And what happened? 5♣ went one down. 3♣ was the contract at two tables and it made or made +1. 3NT was bid just twice and it made 9 or 10 tricks for the top scores.

Overcall or double?Board 2 from Monday 10th, N-S vul

West (C)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ KQ1092	♠ J3	-	-	pass	1♥
♥ Q10	♥ K972	dbl (1)	1NT	all pass	
♦ J6	♦ K543				
♣ KQ32	♣ 864				

1NT by North went minus 1 but scored well. Why? Because East did not lead the ♠ J! With a good 5 card major suit, do not double but overcall in the major suit. People who believe that you have to double to show an opening hand are living in the stone-age. There is, initially, no difference in strength between an overcall and a double (an overcall is around 7-16 pts and a double is generally around 11+), the difference is in the shape of the hand. If you double and then bid again then that shows a strong hand (say 17+ or equivalent); that's why you cannot double with this West hand, if you double and then bid ♠'s over a ♦ response from partner then that shows a much stronger hand.

NT bids are limit bidsBoard 21 from Friday 14th, N-S vul

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ AQ4	♠ K72	-	1♥ (1)	pass	2♦ (2)
♥ K9543	♥ 107	pass	2♥ (3)	pass	2NT (4)
♦ 3	♦ AQJ1075	pass	pass (5)	pass	
♣ Q1092	♣ A7				

A comfortable 3NT was missed, whose fault?

- (1) North's 1♥ opening is borderline; it conforms to the rule of 20 and with good intermediates in the 2nd suit I think it's fine. Also, if partner responds with the expected 1♠ or 1NT, you have an easy rebid.
- (2) Of course partners never do the easy thing.
- (3) The rebid over 2♦ is not so automatic. It's probably a matter of partnership agreement whether to bid 2♥ or 2NT. The modern tendency in Standard American is to bid 2♥ with a minimum (11-12) and 2NT with 13-14 points. Once partner responds in ♦'s this hand is sub-minimum!
- (4) This ♦ suit should come in handy in NT, so bid 2NT?
No! In Standard American the 2♦ response promises 11+ points and a subsequent 2NT shows 11-12 points and is not forcing. This monster should bid 3NT. 2NT is only acceptable if you play 2/1 as the 2♦ bid has set up a game force.
- (5) As I said, with a singleton in partner's suit this hand is now sub-minimal and so North correctly passed.

What happened? 10 tricks were made at every table; 3NT bid twice and 4NT once.

The bottom line. Nearly all NT bids are limit bids, telling partner how many points you have and are non-forcing. A 2NT bid by responder is virtually always 10-12 points and invitational, whether on the first or second round of bidding.

Obey the LawBoard 19 from Friday 14th, E-W vul

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ AJ83	♠ 5	-	-	-	pass
♥ J987	♥ KQ6	pass	pass	1♦	pass
♦ 5	♦ 9874	1♠	dbl (1)	2♠	pass (2)
♣ K1053	♣ AJ976	pass	pass		

2♠ made +1 for a top to E-W, could N-S have done any better?

Yes! North's double at (1) promises at least 4-4 in the *two* unbid suits. With 5 ♣'s South should compete with 3♣ at (2). It's The Law. With roughly equal strength between the two sides, compete to the total number of combined trumps (9 ♣'s = the 3 level). E-W were vulnerable and with only 8 combined trumps they would have passed 3♣.

And why did South take no action? His excuse was that partner was a passed hand. Totally irrelevant.

And what happened? Various results but the top for N-S was 2♣ making 10 tricks. The bottom line. With 9 combined trumps, compete to the 3 level.

When the 5-3 fit is better than NTBoard 7 from Friday 14th, both vul

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ KQ5	♠ AJ92	-	-	-	pass
♥ KQJ104	♥ A32	pass	1♥	pass	1♠ (1)
♦ A10	♦ J8652	pass	3NT (2)	pass	pass (3)
♣ A43	♣ 9	pass			

This contract made +2 but scored a fat zero. Who's fault?

- (1) There is an argument for a 4♣ splinter here, but there may be a ♠ fit and 1♠ is OK I guess. But 5-3 fits are excellent if you can ruff with the short hand.
- (2) The 3NT bid shows about 19 points and a balanced hand (with 5+ ♥'s of course).
- (3) This South hand, with good 3 card support for partner, two aces and a singleton is a monster after partner has shown a huge hand. I would look for slam. But it's difficult to show that ♥'s are trumps, that's why I like a 4♣ splinter at (1). Anyway, this South was not looking for 6♥, but he should look for 4♥ and bid it at (3)! When you have 3 card support for partner's 5 card major and a singleton you will get ruffs in the short hand – that is extra tricks.

And what happened? Every other table was in 4♥, making 12 or 13 tricks.

When NT is better than the 5-3 fitBoard 14 from Friday 14th, love all

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ K742	♠ A86	-	-	pass	2NT
♥ K10653	♥ Q97	pass	3♦ (1)	pass	3♥
♦ 9	♦ AK2	pass	3♠ (2)	pass	3NT (3)
♣ 1094	♣ AK83	all pass			

A 5-3 ♥ fit again, but is it better than NT this time?

- (1) Transfer
- (2) Showing 5 ♥'s and 4 ♠'s
- (3) This time ignoring the 5-3 fit worked out fine. But is it the best bid or should South bid 4♥ here? At teams scoring I would always bid 4♥, at pairs it's not so obvious but I think that 4♥ is usually better:

♠ J742	Just change the North hand slightly to something like this. 4♥ probably
♥ K10653	makes but 3NT stands no chance if the ♥A is trippleton (greater than 50%)
♦ 9	as there is no quick entry to the North hand and opponents will get their ♦'s
♣ J109	before you can get your ♥'s.

And what happened? This time the Gods were kind and 11 tricks were there in either contract and so 3NT was the top spot. 3NT was bid at two other tables, quite how one established pair reached 4♠ by North I don't know. Perhaps South was confused and bid 4♠ at (3)?

The bottom lines, for both of the above. The 5-3 major suit fit is usually better than NT, but you can take a view if you have all unbid suits well stopped or have tenaces. Three card support for partner is great if you have shortage somewhere.

You don't need support with a self-sufficient suitBoard 15 from Friday 14th, N-S vul

North (F)	South		<u>Table A</u>		
		West	North	East	South
♠ KQJ1074	♠ 3	-	-	-	pass
♥ KQ9	♥ 874	pass	1♠	pass	1NT (1)
♦ -	♦ QJ9742	pass	3♠ (2)	pass	pass (3)
♣ KJ108	♣ A62	pass			
			<u>Table B</u>		
		West	North	East	South
		-	-	-	pass
		pass	1♠	pass	1NT (1)
		pass	3♣ (2)	pass	3♦
		pass	4♠ (4)	all pass	

Table A: South does not have enough points to bid 2♦ at (1) and so 1NT is correct. So what did you bid with Hand F in this week's quiz? North's 3♠ bid at (2) shows around 16-17 and is invitational. So OK?

I don't think so. This North hand is a monster and worth game after partner's 1NT response. Points Smoints. South's pass at (3) is quite understandable.

Table B: This North chose a game forcing 3♣ bid at (2), 4♠ directly would be a reasonable alternative. After South's 3♦ bid there is no ♣ fit and so 4♠ at (4) is the right bid. North could have bid 3♠ but he did not as there really is no point (4♠ is where you want to play anyway) and he was afraid that is partner would not realise that the sequence is still game forcing and might pass (he would have!).

And what happened? Only this pair reached the excellent 4♠. One pair stopped in 3♠, one pair stopped in 2♠ and one pair found the seemingly impossible contract of 3NT (minus 2) by North. Nothing on Earth would make me bid NT at any stage with this North hand.

The bottom lines. If you have a self-sufficient (major) suit then don't bother consulting partner. Bid it! Don't rebid NT with a void.

Defenders can finesse!Board 5 from Friday 14th

N	♠ J10	West	North	East	South
W	E				
	♥ J2				
S	♦ Q762	-	pass	pass	pass
	♣ AQ1054	1♠	pass	2♣	pass
♠ K5		2♥	pass	2♠	all pass
♥ KQ106	Dealer:				
♦ K1095	North				
♣ J107	N-S vul				

You are South and East is the dummy. Partner leads the ♦3 and dummy plays the ♦2. Which card do you play?

You should play the ♦9, not the ♦K. This is a 'finesse' against dummy's ♦Q, but it's not one of those 50% chances, it's 100%! It cannot lose unless you have one of those partners who underleads aces. Partner's low card lead usually promises an honour and it can only be the ♦J. Even if declarer turns up with that card it's still best to play the ♦9 as you then have the ♦K10 sitting over the ♦Q. The bottom line? As Henry VIII once said, kings are for taking queens.

The Dutch have a saying 'Derde man doe twat hij kan' (3rd man plays high). But it's double Dutch if there's a finessable honour in dummy.

Don't pass partner's take-out double

Board 14 from Friday 14th, N-S vul

North	South	<u>Table A</u>	North	East	South
♠ 72	♠ AQ6	West	pass	1♦	pass
♥ KJ84	♥ Q63	pass	1♥ (1)	1♠	pass (2)
♦ K104	♦ 862	pass	2♣	pass	pass
♣ A643	♣ J1098	2♠	pass	pass	pass

Table B

West	North	East	South
-	pass	1♦	pass
pass	dbl (1)	pass	pass (3)
pass			

Table A: North has an interesting choice at (1) in the balancing seat. Pass is certainly reasonable, 1♥ maybe less so. 1NT is probably the best bid. With 3 card support, South should bid 2♥ at (2).

Table B: But the one bid I don't really like at (1) is double with only 2♠'s. But the really really silly bid is South's pass at (3). Just because you have no nice bid, that's no reason to gift the opponents a top (1♦ doubled rolled home with an overtrick). So what should South bid at (3)? The cheapest 4 card suit, so 2♣ is recommended. 1NT would be the bid with a ♦ stop.

The bottom lines. Don't make a take-out double with just a doubleton in an unbid major. Don't pass partner's take-out double unless you have excellent trumps and expect to set the contract, you will get a bottom score.

Bidding Quiz Answers

Hand A: 1♠. Do not deny a 4 card major by bidding 1NT.

Hand B: 3♣, Stayman. Do not deny a 4 card major by bidding 3NT.

Hand C: 1♠. An overcall with a 5 card major is better than a double.

Hand D: It's probably not quite strong enough for 2♣, so 1♣ playing Standard American. This is a good hand for Benjamin twos – open 2♣ and rebid 3♣ over partner's 2♦; this shows 9 playing tricks in ♣'s (with the ♠K, an outside 4 card suit and a void, it's worth 9 tricks). Two (!!) players elected to open with a pre-emptive (??) 3♣ on Monday. They are in my black book.

Hand E: 2♣. Too strong for a 1 level opening.

Hand F: (a) 3♣ or 4♠. The hand is worth game and 3♠ is non-forcing.

(b) 4♠. The auction is game forcing, but with this excellent suit there is little point in bidding anything other than 4♠.

Hand G: 1♣ (and rebid 2NT over partner's 1♦/♥/♠/NT). Far too good for a 1NT opening.

Hand H: 1♣. Ditto.

Hand J: 3NT. Clubs are for cave men.

Hand K: Look for slam. Asking for aces (4♣) or simply bidding 6NT are reasonable but I don't think that the hand is quite good enough to charge in. I would bid 4NT, quantitative.

♣ ♦

Club News Sheet – No. 81

21/5/2004

♥ ♠

Monday 17/5/04

Friday 21/5/04

1st Dave/Bob 68%
2nd = Kenneth/David 56%
2nd = Clive/Alex 56%

1st Chuck/Richard (UK) 60%
2nd Dave/Bob 56%

A bumper issue this week. This is because Hans gave me an article which he wanted me to include and I had the odd comment or twenty on it.

Bidding Quiz

Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.

Hand A

Hand B

♠ A10532
♥ 9
♦ KQ
♣ AK962

♠ A83
♥ Q8642
♦ 83
♣ 963

With Hand A you open 1♠ and partner responds 1NT.
What do you bid?

With Hand B partner opens 1NT, what do you do?

Hand C

Hand D

♠ AQ72
♥ K94
♦ K96
♣ AK6

♠ J2
♥ A543
♦ AJ865
♣ 72

(a) what do you open with Hand C?
(b) suppose you open 1♣ and partner bids 1♥, what now?

With Hand D partner opens 1♥, what is your response?

Hand E

Hand F

♠ K72
♥ 107
♦ A
♣ AKQ10972

♠ A85
♥ AQ1043
♦ A
♣ AQ64

With Hand E LHO opens 1♦ and this is passed round to you.
What is your bid?

(a) What do you open with Hand F?
(b) Suppose you choose 1♥ with the intention of rebidding 3♣ over a 1♠ response from partner. Fine, but LHO overcalls 2♣ and partner responds 2♠, what do you bid now?

Hand G

Hand H

♠ 53
♥ AKJ109854
♦ A108
♣ -

♠ K1085
♥ Q1072
♦ AJ
♣ 943

With Hand G partner opens 1♦ and you respond 2♥ (strong).
Suppose partner bids 4♥ and you want to investigate slam,
what do you bid?

With Hand H partner opens 1♦ and you bid 1♥. Partner then
rebids 2NT (18-19 pts), what do you bid?

Hand J

Hand K

♠ 752
♥ KQ743
♦ KQ54
♣ K

♠ J8
♥ AJ75
♦ 108432
♣ Q8

With Hand J you open 1♥ and partner responds 1♠, what is
your rebid?

With Hand K partner opens 1♠ and you respond 1NT. Partner
then bids 2♣, what do you do?

Reaction to the article 'No Idea about pre-empts? – part 2' in the club news-sheet 78

Hans was kind enough to type up his reaction to this article of mine where I (as director) decided to award both sides an average score when there was a difference of opinion between Hans and Chuck. Hans requested that his 'story' be reproduced in the news-sheet, so here it is in full. Obviously I have a few comments and so the words in brackets are my addition and I comment on these points later. This was the full deal: -

Dealer:	♠ A	Board 5 from Monday 26 th			
North	♥ K1076				
N-S vul	♦ K62	West	North	East (A)	South
	♣ KJ854	(Hans)	(Chuck)	(Jeff)	(me)
♠ K1086	N	♠ QJ53	-	1♣	4♦ (1) pass
♥ QJ2	W E	♥ A5	pass	dbl	pass pass
♦ 3	S	♦ AQJ9854	pass		
♣ Q10973		♣ -			
	♠ 9742				
	♥ 9843				4♦ made +1 for a complete 'top' but I later
	♦ 107				adjusted the score to give everybody an average.
	♣ A62				

I have typed Hans' contribution in a different font so that his writings and mine are not confused. The comments in brackets in my font are my additions for clarity. So, here goes: -

This article is a story about a board in which I (Hans) and some other well known players of this club (Jeff, Chuck, Terry) were involved. After reading this article and seeing all four hands I disagree with the Director's decision and the changing of the score even more. But before explaining why, first a little history.

About 15 years ago I learned to play bridge over a period of 6 months (A) with an evening session every week. The bidding system I learned was Acol. During this period you only learned the basic principles. Because I liked the game I joined a Bridge club in my village. To give an impression of what this club was like: there were 5 lines (A-E), with each line comprising 16 pairs. Because of promotion/relegation during the season, all the good players were in the higher lines with beginners and less gifted players in the lower lines. There was a considerable difference in strength; in the A-line there were at least 4 people who play or played in the highest divisions in Holland (they sometimes even got relegated). The lower lines were on a par with people of the Pattaya Bridge Club, out to enjoy their game. The advantage of this structure is that less gifted players are not 'bothered' by the good players or visa-versa. And the more gifted players improve by playing against the better ones.

After playing for seven years in this club I was asked if I could do some voluntary work for the club. Because this club was run on a voluntary basis I said yes and joined the technical commission (which consisted of 8 people, having meetings every 2 months). This technical commission had the responsibility for all the competitions going on within the club. I needed to pass an exam in order to do this work correctly. To succeed in this exam I had to follow 12 lessons (lasting 4 hours each) given by a highly rated bridge referee. It was also necessary to have

a certain level of Bridge playing skill in order to get the answers right. I passed this exam, although it was tough. I never realised that there was so much to it.

I did this work for the technical commission for 6 years. In those 6 years I learned a lot about refereeing, especially the 'standard' situations which occur, and how to deal with them. This also helped to improve my skill at the game.

After relating all of this, I think that I can give a sensible reaction to the article in news-sheet 78.

Point 1: First, a general description of what I have learned about a pre-empt is: -

- (B) 1- An opening in a suit at the 3-level or higher. 6♣ is also a pre-empt.
- (C) 2- A double jump or more in a suit after an opening by the opponents.
- (D) 3- The bid should show the required number of playing tricks minus two when vulnerable and minus three when non-vulnerable.
- (E) 4- You have at least 7 cards in the suit.
- (F) 5- After you have pre-empted you have said it all; never bid again.
- (G) 6- A pre-empt bid usually has the purpose of making it difficult for the opponents rather than making the contract.

♠ QJ53 So back to the 4♦ bid after RHO had opened 1♣:

♥ A5 East (this hand) was showing 7 playing tricks because we were vulnerable,

♦ AQJ9854 When you look at the hand there are about $7\frac{1}{2}$ tricks, but I can

♣ - understand that East thought that the 4♦ bid was high enough against such excellent players. My own opinion of this pre-empt is this: up until

- (H) 5 years ago I made pre-empt bids with the same kind of hands. But then I partnered someone who explained to me that this kind of hand has too much potential. We made some special agreements on when to open with a pre-empt bid, especially when first or second hand. But these are partnership agreements (every partnership has it's own agreements) and not rules. And we agreed no psyches! If you want to know what psyches (J) are, I can give some nice examples.

- (K) Point 2: I smiled, but absolutely not with a wry smile, because the person who asked the question (Hans is referring to me, Terry) already knew the answer. The second reason why I smiled was because of this questioning. This gave me the impression that South (Terry) considered making a bid. And seeing my hand I thought that this pre-empt had perfect timing, i.e. South had a terrible decision to make.
- (L) Point 3; Seeing this North hand (Chuck's), this double can only be for penalty. So the decision that he can make at least 4 tricks to set the contract on his own, his partner (Terry) has not shown any values. Or was it some kind of convention for a certain lead?
- (M) So now my decision as a referee when I was asked to solve this kind of dispute: This is easy as these situations occur quite often. Here N-S think that they have been mis-lead by some sort of 'hidden' partnership agreement of E-W.
The situation when there is clearly something wrong with E-W's bidding is when West (Hans), after South's pass, makes a bid other than pass so that E-W end up in a game contract of 4♠ or 5♦. But even then the decision (if E-W have done something wrong) should also be based on the level of the E-W players and how long they have been playing together.
- (N) Speaking about level, these N-S players should know better than punish the wrong bid of East by making the right bid themselves.
- (P) At point 2: South asked the meaning of a bid and whatever the answer was he would pass. I learned that this is not smart; it may help opponents to come back on the 'right bidding track'. It also can confuse your partner because it gives him the idea that you have something. If I remember it well there is/was a rule that even forbids you to ask things about the bidding when the answer will not influence your bidding. But these kinds of rules only apply to players playing at the highest level.
- (Q) At point 3: For a player at this level (Chuck) it is a very strange decision to double knowing that the ♦K is offside. Was this decision influenced by the questions of partner or just a wrong bid, showing that Chuck is just human? By just passing N-S only lose -150, which must be a good result.
- (R) Conclusion: The bid of 4♦ at (1) is completely legal and there is absolutely no reason to change the score.

Some general remarks:

- (S) Changing a score without both parties agreeing happens almost never. A score is a result of a bidding sequence between two sides in which they put energy into making the right bids. And when a score is changed, there are special rules. It can't just be taken out to give both sides their average. In this example the change will probably result in a so called 'split score'. Remember this also: changing the score affects the other results on the board. A pair that has nothing to do with this dispute can drop in the end result from 1st to 2nd place...
- The two most complicated situations for a referee to solve are:
 1. When pairs play a lot of conventions which they don't understand or simply forget.
 2. Trying to solve a problem (for example leading from the wrong hand)
- (T) without a referee, and after the play asking for the referee when one of the opponents is unhappy with the score. - calling the referee on time is absolutely not impolite, it is part of the game. It helps to avoid really difficult situations.
- (U) I hope that this story can be published in the next club news sheet (always willing to oblige – so here it is in full – Terry) so that things become more clear for a lot of people. It also gives a better picture of Jeff who is absolutely not misleading people at the Bridge table.

Greetings, Hans.

Well, there you have it. Wasn't it refreshing to get away from my tedious articles about the same old things (denying 4 card majors, 1NT openings out or range etc). Many thanks Hans, a nice little article and to the point. You clearly put your point of view across and I certainly don't mind anybody criticising me (as long as you don't mind me getting my word in). I can take it. Anyway, we are now back in the real world, and I (this is Terry from now on) obviously have a few comments!

(A) When Hans refers to Acol it is not Acol in the recognised sense. It is 'Dutch' Acol, a system with which I am very familiar (I had to play it for 5 years when I lived in Holland) but that I happen to despise, but that's beside the point. Dutch Acol is a strong NT and 4 card majors. But because it is lousy to play 4 card majors with a strong NT the Dutch try to avoid it by always open 4 card suits up the line. So a 4 card major is only opened when exactly 4333 or 3433 or 4432 or 4423 and not 15-17 points. It's nonsense of course, but that's what it is. And it most certainly is not Acol. Sacrilege. What would John G or Sheila or Dave say?

I have asked (and put in the news-sheet) that Dutch players should not say that they play Acol when asked at our club. *They do not*. Acol is a street in North London where the system was invented. Can't the Dutch think up a name for their *totally* different system? Rottendam?

(B) An opening suit bid at the 3 level is certainly a pre-empt, but higher bids need to be discussed: -

4♣/♦ If you play these as natural then they are pre-empts. Remember this hand from last week's news-sheet (♠K8 ♥ - ♦1082 ♣AKQJ9872)? Hans actually opened it with a gambling 3NT. That's maybe OK if you agree that an outside king is acceptable, but I believe that most who play that an outside king is OK would not make the bid with an 8 card suit and such a king – the hand is then far too strong for a pre-empt. However, when discussing the hand Hans said that if 3NT was not an option he would open 4♣. Now I think that that is a terrible bid; you have gone past 3NT which may well be the best spot. This is a big hand (way too good for any pre-empt) and a 1♣ opening seems obvious to me, close to 2♣! So, I don't really like to open 4♣/♦ in the natural sense (I prefer Namyats – I'll cover this at a later date); but if you do, I recommend that the hand should not contain the ace of the suit as 3NT may then easily be a good contract if partner has a smidgeon of points.

4♥/♠ Now these are Pre-empts of a sort. But since they are at the game level they may well be a very respectable hand, they certainly could have opening values or better. If you interchange the ♥'s and ♦'s in Jeff's East hand then a 4♥ bid would have been quite acceptable – and Chuck most certainly would not have doubled a 4♥ or 4♠ bid.

5♣/♦ Pre-emptive. But again, I would be wary of making these bid if 3NT (or slam!) could be a makeable final contract.

5♥/5♠ Now you could agree to play these as pre-emptive but there's another sensible alternative. Consider ♠ - ♥QJ1098762 ♦AK ♣AKQ, what do you open? It seems sensible to me to open 5♥, partner then knows that only top ♥ honours are of any significance and he should raise a level for each top ♥ (AKQ) honour held regardless of the rest of the hand.

6♣/♦/♥/♠ Pre-emptive? Possibly, bid 6♣ with ♠ - ♥ 43 ♦ AK ♣ QJ10987654 ?

But how about: - ♠ - ♥AKQ ♦A ♣AQJ1098765, a 6♣ opening bid is certainly a sensible bid - as long as partner knows what's going on and bids 7♣ with a top ♣ honour regardless. Either is quite playable, up to you. The problem with having these very high pre-empts with hands that have a lot of trick making potential is that the hand may belong to you and you are also pre-empting partner.

(C) Precisely. A double jump or more after opponents open (1♣ - 4♦), this is normally played as pre-emptive by most players (but apparently not all!). At least we agree on something.

(D) *'The bid should show the required number of playing tricks minus two when vulnerable and minus three when non-vulnerable'*. This is a recommendation rather than a rule. Pre-empt are getting weaker and weaker as the years go by (Marty Bergen probably has a lot to do with it).

(E) In a recent **international** match South opened 3♥ with ♠95 ♥Q10873 ♦652 ♣J102 in 3rd seat at favourable vulnerability. Now I would not really recommend this (please don't do it at our club) but the modern trend is certainly towards very weak (unsound?) pre-empts. A far cry from the Hans/Jeff bids. Another reason for this silly bid is the 'silly' rules that are applied to weak twos but not weak threes. I will go into this at a later date.

(F) I agree. Once you have pre-empted, never bid again unless partner invites.

(G) Now here we get down to the nitty-gritty. A pre-empt should be capable of making a reasonable number of tricks and the 'rules of 2,3,4' (refer to the 2004 year-book) give a guide as to how many playing tricks a pre-empt should have. 7 is quite reasonable at the 4 level as Hans states. But the hand should be weak in high cards, i.e. not an opening hand if the pre-empt is not a game bid. Consider ♠AK ♥A ♦8765432 ♣A109, this has a 7 card suit and 7 or so playing tricks, so open or overcall 3 or 4♦? Perhaps if Hans or Jeff are your partner, but otherwise you will quickly run out of partners.

Now this is the point that some people apparently fail to realise. The pre-empt should have the playing strength from the long suit, most certainly not from outside aces and kings. Hands that have opening values should not pre-empt *below the game level*.

And there is one notable omission from Hans' list of criteria for a pre-empt, and I know that it is one that Hans is *most* insistent upon – do not pre-empt with a decent 4 card major. Did Hans simply forget this, or did the fact that Jeff's hand also had a decent 4 card ♠ suit mean that he conveniently 'forgot' to add this to his list of requirements for a pre-empt?

(H) Now here I certainly have the advantage over Hans. When I first took up Bridge some 35 years ago I was fortunate enough to be taught by experts from the word go. I did not meet poor partners for a few months and so most certainly had not picked up bad habits. I have not picked them up since and have never pre-empted on a hand like this in my life.

(J) I have no doubt that both you and Jeff can give many examples of psyches, see (U).

(K) Now here we come to the crux of the matter. First of all, why did I ask Hans what the bid meant when I already knew the answer and had no intention of bidding? This is most definitely a practice that I do not recommend, however the circumstances were somewhat unusual here. First of all, the rules keep changing and I believe that bids at the 4 level and above need not be alerted (I may well be wrong here, but it is not important). So I knew that Hans most certainly would not alert and tell Chuck the true meaning of the bid. As I said in the article in news sheet 78, Jeff made a similar bid (4♣) with a very strong hand (♠A ♥A10 ♦KJ87 ♣AK6532) just a couple of weeks ago when again playing with Hans. Obviously Jeff considers this jump to the 4 level as a very strong bid, I knew this, and Hans knew this, and Hans knew that I knew this (hence his smile?). When I asked the question I did not need to be told how the bid is generally played (weak), 'everybody' knows that; the question was how does Jeff play it, and the answer to that (which I already knew) was strong, and that is the answer that Hans should have given. As I said, I knew that Hans would not divulge this information to Chuck without prompting and that is why I asked the question in a situation where I normally would not. Hans most certainly knew that Jeff's bid could be as strong as this example hand (19 points!) and Chuck was most certainly entitled to have this information. Hans was duty bound to inform Chuck that the bid may be very strong. He absolutely failed to do so. This is mis-information and would be punished severely by any director less lenient than me. More of this later.

South (me), of course, had no terrible decision to make; except that I knew that Chuck would erupt at the end of the hand and then something would have to be done.

And there was nothing devious behind the double. It simply showed an above average hand. Not strictly penalties but usually passed.

- (L) Chuck's decision to double was certainly his own, it may or may not be dubious, but that is not the issue. If Chuck had the information that he was entitled to have (that East had a strong hand) then he most certainly would not have doubled. If I were sitting North and Chuck South then there would have been an entirely different outcome as I would certainly have passed, not because I am any better at bidding than Chuck, nor because Chuck's bid was unwise (it was perfectly acceptable under the circumstances as he understood them), but because I knew that Jeff had a strong hand. As for Chuck's partner (me) promising nothing; that is true, but with a proper pre-empt on Chuck's left and silence on his right, it is normal to expect partner to have some values.
- (M) Chuck and myself certainly feel that there was a 'hidden' agreement. Hans knew that his partner's bid was strong. The fact that he did not take advantage of this by openly cheating and bidding game is commendable (but there would have been absolutely no problem if he had informed everybody that the bid was strong and then bid game). But the issue is the fact that 3 people at the table knew exactly what was going on and Chuck was left in the dark. I tried to make it easy for Hans by asking my question, but he chose to deliberately mis-lead Chuck. And as for the level of E-W, Hans is apparently a very experienced player of a high level. Jeff has finished first at the Club (often in harness with Alex) on numerous occasions. Hans has played with Jeff on many occasions. There is no doubt at all that they are both well above the beginner's stage and knew what they were doing.
- (N) I totally agree. If Chuck was given the true meaning of East's bid then Jeff would most certainly have been punished by a pass from Chuck. But the point is not Jeff's appalling bid, but the inability of his partner to explain that the bid was strong when he most certainly knew this to be the case.
- (P) I agree that it is best not to ask questions if the answer is not going to influence your bid. The only reason I asked is that I believe that Chuck was entitled to know about your partnership understanding that the bid was strong; and I was sure that you would not inform him without being prompted. I believe that the 'smart' thing to do is to answer questions correctly when asked.
- (Q) Chuck's 'bad' decision was based on bad information. It most certainly was not influenced by my question. Chuck is a player of the highest integrity and certainly knows the rules and that any inference that could possibly be obtained by a question of his partner's is 'unauthorised information'. I suspect that he is a little grieved at the fact that Hans would even suggest this? One is not allowed to let any question (or answer to an opponent's question) by partner affect your bidding. And suggesting that Chuck is 'just human'? Well, really! Was Clark Kent 'just human'?
- (R) I agree that Jeff's 4♦ bid is totally legal. You can, by and large, play whatever you like. You could choose to play an opening bid of 4♦ as a strong bid and game forcing if you wish. *But the opponents are entitled to know.* The culprit here was not Jeff and most certainly not me or Chuck. The whole mess was caused by Hans not informing the opponents about his partner's bid as he was obliged to do. A 'referee' should most certainly know this.

(S) As for both parties agreeing to a change of score; I would think the opposite, that both parties would hardly ever agree. That is why the director has to arbitrate and *he* decides upon any adjustment. And while we are on the subject, I know that my ruling of awarding an average to both parties was incorrect; I did it in an attempt not to upset anybody too much (impossible, I know). The correct ruling, of course, is that Jeff should be warned that this bid is normally pre-emptive. But the main thing is that Hans was totally at fault by giving mis-information. He would have been given a severe reprimand in any other environment, warned and fined. The score would most certainly have been reset to 4♦ making +1 undoubled, it most certainly would not be a 'split score'.

(U) Finally Hans says '*Jeff is absolutely not misleading people*'. Really?

Making a 'pre-emptive' bid with ♠A ♥A10 ♦KJ87 ♣AK6532 ?

This most certainly is not a hand to pre-empt in my view. Presumably it would be OK in Hans' definition because it is around 7 playing tricks, but it is unfortunately only a 6 card suit. Misleading? And how about opening 1♣ and then rebidding ♣'s with ♠AJ98 ♥QJ75 ♦A96 ♣104 ?

With this last hand the complete bidding was 1♣ - 2NT - 3♣ - 3NT. I can think of no logical reason for rebidding a 2 card suit other than to inhibit the lead against the obvious expected final 3NT contract, can you? One may call this misleading **at best**. It is, as suggested by Chuck, a psyche (do you agree Hans?). But then I have no doubt that Hans' definition of a psyche is far removed from mine or Chuck's? Jeff bid this against Chuck and Chuck called me over. I said to forget it. I certainly will not next time and Jeff will receive an adjusted (unfavourable) score no matter what his partner thinks.

Looks like Hans and myself even disagree on the definition of the word misleading?

These two examples make it perfectly clear that Jeff is 'absolutely' misleading people. The only question is, is he doing it deliberately or is it just that he does not have a clue? I will always give somebody the benefit of the doubt, so my view up to now was that he is clueless. Chuck has a more down to earth approach - somebody with years of experience and who repeatedly comes top in the club tournament cannot be clueless. So which is it, Hans? Either way it's misleading!

The bottom lines: - At least I have learned one thing from Hans' story – he considers himself an A-line player who knows the rules. Fine. Now Chuck frequently calls the director when there has been an infraction, and that is what one should do as Hans correctly pointed out at (T). Chuck is, of course, usually right; but I tend to be lenient towards the opponents as the standard at our club is not very high and people naturally tend to make mistakes. I tend to try to shield them from Chuck who may seem somewhat intimidating to the less experienced players. But I will certainly no longer do so with Hans or Jeff. They will get what the rules dictate (so in this case not an average but 4♦ making +1 undoubled, so a bottom).

The rules will be strictly applied to both Hans and Jeff from now on. This also includes a penalty for failure to count the cards before looking at them. Playing out a hand with 14 or 12 cards is inexcusable. The rules are *very* clear here. And I don't really appreciate an 'ex-referee' criticising me when I did not allow a board to be played out after the bidding was completed and then one player discovered that he had 15 cards and another just 11! The rules are also clear here, both culprits should have been fined and the board certainly not played.

So, Hans and myself totally disagree on just about everything (what a surprise). Now it's little old me against Hans with all of his exams and experience in Holland; only one of us can possibly be right, I'll leave it up to you to decide who.

Just one final point. If there are individual(s) who think that I am doing a bad job of running the club, then why not show us how it should be done? I have said this before, I am more than willing to lend out my equipment (free of charge) to anybody who wants to set up a club on another day. Nothing would please me more that to be able to have a quiet game of bridge with a partner I get on with (yes, there are 1 or 2) and not have to worry about all the aspects of being the director. So give it a go? But perhaps it's simply easier to criticise me?

I think that 8 pages is quite enough to explain Hans' and my differing views on these topics (but hasn't it been fun?), so let's have some Bridge: -

What's the rebid?

Board 27 from Monday 17th, love all

West (F)	East	<u>Table A</u>			
		West	North	East	South
♠ A85	♠ KJ9743	-	-	-	pass
♥ AQ1043	♥ 75	1♥ (1)	pass	1♠ (2)	pass
♦ A	♦ Q10842	3♣ (3)	pass	3♠ (4)	pass
♣ AQ64	♣ -	4♠ (5)	all pass		

<u>Table B</u>			
West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
1♥ (1)	2♣	2♠ (6)	pass
4♠ (7)	all pass		

Table A: This table bid very sensibly to the top spot.

(1) So what would you open? Unlike a 1NT opener it is allowed (but I don't usually recommend it) to open 2NT with a singleton, preferably an ace or king, sometimes there really is no other sensible opening. But his hand has two good suits and is easy to bid naturally, so 1♥ is best. Even if you play strong twos this hand has points, but not the required playing strength for a strong two.

(2) An obvious 1♠ response.

(3) Showing the 2nd suit. This is known as a high reverse (the 2nd bid is at the 3 level) and it is game forcing.

(4) There is no need to show the ♦ suit when you have a 6 card ♠ suit. Anyway, 3♦ here would be the 4th suit and would only complicate matters. 3NT, with a void and a reasonable 6 card major would be a lousy bid.

(5) Knowing that East probably has a 6 card ♠ suit, West is happy to support.

Table B: This time there was interference, but very sensible bidding again.

(6) After the overcall the response has to be at the two level. It does not really have the values for a two level response and some may prefer a negative double. But with two decent suits, tolerance for partner's suit and a *useful* void, I think it's sensible to show the long suit. Sometimes you have to overbid slightly when the opponents interfere. A negative double would only promise 4 ♠'s whereas the 2♠ bid promises 5+.

(7) North's overcall has taken away West's natural rebid, but he has no problem as East's bid guarantees a 5 card suit and a jump to 4♠ is the correct bid (you could choose to bid 3♣, the opponent's suit; but I prefer 4♠, it's simpler). This sequence illustrates why it is important that a major suit response at the two level must guarantee a 5(+) card suit – opener must be free to support with just 3 cards.

And what happened? 3 tables reached 4♠, one making and the other two +1. But one table managed to bid to the poor 4♥ contract, I've no idea how.

Blackwood with a weak suit?

Board 10 from Friday 21st, both vul.

North South (G)

♠ J10 ♠ 53
♥ Q2 ♥ AKJ109854
♦ KJ963 ♦ A108
♣ AKQJ ♣ -

Table A:

West	North	East	South
pass	1♦	pass	1♥ (1)
pass	2NT (2)	pass	4NT (3)
pass	6NT (4)	all pass	

Table B:

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

These two tables landed in a poor slam, what went wrong? all pass

Table A: 1♥ at (1) is fine, but 2♥ is the best bid if you play strong jump shifts (standard). It shows a very good suit and is game forcing. Anyway, 1♥ is fine, but what about 2NT at (2)? 18-19 (17-19 if you play a weak NT), so OK? With this weak doubleton ♠ and excellent 2nd suit, I would prefer to bid ♣'s; so either 2♣ or 3♣, depending upon your style. South's 4NT at (3) was intended as Blackwood, North took it as quantitative. I've been over this a few times; I prefer to play 4♣ Gerber when partner's last bid was 2NT and 4NT as a quantitative raise, but it's up to each individual partnership. Anyway, that is not the real problem as a one ace reply does not really help (is it the ♠A or the ♣A?). The solution is below.

Table B: This time South chose 2♥ at (5) which should make the auction easier. Since the auction is game forcing North could bid 3♣ at (6), but with the ♥Qx of ♥'s I would prefer 3♥ opposite partner's advertised excellent suit. The poor slam was also reached when South bid Blackwood at (7).

At the other two tables North bid either 2♣ or 3♣ at (2); since South did not like this 2nd suit he simply jumped to 4♥ and a slam was not investigated. Now I have said that I don't like 2NT at (2) or 4♥ at (6); but suppose that South wants to go slamming, is there a way to avoid the slam with two top losers in a suit?

Yes, there are a couple of solutions. Normal Blackwood is never a good idea when you are missing two aces and have a void. If partner responds one ace you have no idea if it is the useful one or the one in your void suit. One method with a void is Exclusion Blackwood, if partner's bid at (6) had been 3♥ then a jump to 5♣ would have been Exclusion Blackwood, asking for aces outside the ♣ suit. However, that is not possible after the 4♥ bid at (6) because 5♣ is now a cue bid (Exclusion Blackwood is always a *jump* to the 5 level).

But anyway, any sort of Blackwood is unwise when you have a weak suit which partner has not bid (the ♠'s in this example). The South hand simply should not bid Blackwood at all, but cuebid 5♣ at (7) (4♣ if North had bid 3♥). This shows 1st round control, is looking for slam, and invites partner to cue bid a 1st round control in return. Note that the 5♣ cuebid has denied the ♠A; if North had the ♠A he would cue bid it, so without it or the ♦A he bids 5♥. This is a simple variation of a cuebidding style and is what you do when Blackwood is unwise.

And what happened? Both slams went down. The bottom lines?

- Don't use Blackwood with a void.
- Don't use Blackwood with a weak suit (no ace or king) that partner has not bid.
- Agree with your partner when to use Gerber or Blackwood.
- Try cuebidding as a prelude/alternative to Blackwood when appropriate.

Does it show 4 or 5 cards?

Board 12 from Friday 21st,
N-S vul

North (H) South

♠ K1085 ♠ A72
♥ Q1072 ♥ K94
♦ AJ ♦ KQ96
♣ 943 ♣ AK6

Table A

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

Table B

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

Table C

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

3NT is the best contract, so what went wrong at table C? -

Table A: This table got to the correct contract but I don't like the opening bid. 2NT is generally played as 20-21 (or 20-22) points. This hand, with its totally flat 4333 type shape is only worth 18 (deduct one for the shape).

Table B: This table got it right, but should North have bid 3♠ at (3) or did South's 2NT deny 4♠'s?

Table C: This North was not sure and so bid 3♠ at (3). Unfortunately South assumed that this showed 5♥'s and so he quite reasonably bid 4♥.

So then, does 2NT at (2) deny 4♠'s? (what did you bid with Hand C in this week's quiz?). And does 3♠ at (3) show 5♥'s? Let's start with the 2NT bid. You can play that 2NT denies 4♠'s but then you would have to jump to 2♠ when you hold 4♠'s. Quite playable, and this is what many players would do with 18-19 points and a 4 card ♠ suit. But I personally would prefer a more shapely hand (5 or 6 ♣'s). With my preferred style the 2NT bid may have a 4 card ♠ suit. So what does partner do? He cannot bid 3♠ as then opener has no idea if he has 4 or 5♥'s. The solution is that you have to play Checkback Stayman (or New Minor Forcing); 3♣ at (3) is artificial and asks opener to bid 3♥ with 3♥'s or 3♠ with 4♠'s, else 3NT (or 3♦).

Checkback Stayman (or New Minor Forcing) is also used after 1NT rebid. It is a very useful convention but perhaps better left to the more experienced players. In this particular situation I think it's best to jump to 2♠ rather than 2NT when you have a 4 card ♠ suit if you do not play Checkback Stayman.

One final point. Suppose that you do play Checkback Stayman, then what does the 3♠ bid promise in the auction 1♦ - 1♥ - 2NT - 3♠? Since with 5♥'s and/or 4♠ one bids Checkback this bid can only show 4♠'s and 6♥'s.

The bottom line. Be very wary of 'reversing' without reversing shape. Although North's 3♠ here at (3) does not show extra values after South's strong bid, I would take it as showing more♥'s than♠'s. And indeed, if you play Checkback, then showing 6♥'s!

Bidding in the balancing Seat

Board 21 from Friday 21st

Dealer: ♠ AQ4
 North ♥ K9543
 N-S vul ♦ J10753
 ♣ -

♠ K72	N	♠ 10963
♥ 107	W E	♥ AQJ2
♦ A	S	♦ Q84
♣ AKQ10972		♣ J4

♠ J85
 ♥ 86
 ♦ K962
 ♣ 8653

Table A

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

Table B

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

Table C

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

Table D

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	pass	pass
3♣ (1)	pass	pass (6)	pass

The board was played 4 times and nobody found the excellent 3NT.

Table A: A big hand, so double at (1)? I guess that a double followed by bidding ♣'s is OK, but there are actually better bids as we shall see. Anyway, what about East's 2♠ bid? It is a free bid (after North's 2♦ bid East can pass without values and so a free bid is around 6-10 points). Of course one never denies a 4 card major and West normally has ♠'s when he doubles ♥'s and so 2♠ here is fine. And West's raise to 4♠? Now this I do not like. I said that double at (1) is acceptable if you follow it up with a ♣ bid; this may well be a Moysian ♠ fit and 3NT could easily be the best contract. I would not be in this situation (I would not have doubled) but 3♣ is the best bid now and partner would undoubtedly bid 3NT, the top spot.

Table B: So bid 2♣ at (1)? No, it's too good. And what I said about the above auction is largely applicable to this one.

Table C: And of course it's nearly as bad to play in just 2♣. North's decision not to compete at (4) worked very well. East should bid 2♠ at (5).

Table D: Now a couple of players asked me about this one. You play weak jump overcalls, so this is 3♣ at (1) weak? No! There is no such thing as a weak bid in the pass-out seat. Whether you generally play weak jump overcalls or not this is strong (or intermediate). This is what I would bid with most partners. East will then obviously not pass (knowing that it is not weak) but the other implications of the bid make life easier; when West jumps in ♣'s this shows a good hand and a good suit and generally denies interest in a major suit contract – the emphasis being on NT or possibly a ♣ slam. East should then not bother with his ♠ suit but bid 3NT.

Now I said that I would bid 3♣ at (1) with most players, but Chuck came up with the best bid. In these situations a jump cue bid (so 3♥ here at (1)) has a very specific meaning – it tells partner to bid 3NT if he has the suit stopped (and implies a good long solid minor) as described in news-sheet 61. 3NT is then easy for East. What happened? 4♠ went -1 twice and the ♣ contracts made overtricks.

Opening twos in 4th seat.

And a word about opening bids in 4th seat. Now it is possible to write a whole book on bidding in the pass-out seat (indeed, Ron Klinger has) but I'll just mention two-level openers.

There is no point in opening with any bid in 4th seat unless you expect a plus score, so weak 2♦/♥/♠ are out. What should these bids mean? There are a few sensible options. One is to play them as 'weak' twos, but with a higher point range, say 9-12. But I would be very wary of opening a 'weak' 2♦ or 2♥ in 4th seat without good ♠'s. Probably a better solution, unless you play Benjamin, is to play them as strong.

A Comfortable Slam Missed

Board 14 from Monday 17th, love all.

West (D)

East

♠ J2

♠ K

♥ A543

♥ KQJ1062

♦ AJ865

♦ K2

♣ 72

♣ AK104

Table A:

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

Table B:

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

Table C:

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

There are an easy 12 tricks.

So where did it go wrong? I don't like the bidding at any of the tables: -

Table A: This West decided that it would be best to show his ♦'s before supporting ♥'s. This is fine if you have a game going hand (bidding 4♥ after a simple rebid from opener is a delayed game raise, showing a sound raise to 4♥). But this West hand is only invitational and a subsequent invitational 3♥ bid shows just 3 card ♥ support.

Table B: This West did not like his hand as much and bid just 2♥. East's raise to 4♥ at (2) is then obvious.

Table C: This West again fancied his hand and so bid game straightaway at (1). Unfortunately this is played as a weak pre-emptive raise and so East quite correctly passed at (2).

So which West was right and how should the hand be bid?

Actually, none of the West's got it right; the correct bid at (1) is an invitational 3♥. This shows 10-12 points; with 4 card support, two aces, a decent 5 card suit and two doubletons this hand is worth 3♥. East would then simply ask for aces and then bid 6♥.

There is another solution if you play Benjamin or strong twos. This East hand is worth a strong two bid and then 6♥ should be easily reached.

And what happened? These 3 E-W's actually shared the top as nobody bid slam and the N-S pair at the 4th table found a 5♠ sacrifice that went four down but was not doubled!

The bottom lines. If you have an invitational hand, then invite! When you have an invitational hand with 4 card support for partner's major, bid an invitational 3♥/♠ directly. Raising partner's major directly to 4 is a weak bid and does not suggest looking for slam. If you bid freely to game and the opponents sacrifice at the 5 level, then double them!

Lead top of a (near) sequence

Board 11 from Monday 17th,

Dealer:	♠ A6	West	North	East	South
South	♥ K63				
Love all	♦ 10975	-	-	-	pass
	♣ AK75	1♦	pass (1)	1NT (2)	pass
		3NT (3)	all pass		
♠ K843	N	♠ QJ52			
♥ Q74	W E	♥ 952			
♦ AJ84	S	♦ KQ			
♣ Q8		♣ 10432			
	♠ 1097				
	♥ AJ108				
	♦ 632				
	♣ J96				

3NT is obviously a silly contract that went 2 down, let's look at the bidding: -

First of all, what would you do with the North hand at (1)? It's a reasonable 14 count, so not quite good enough for 1NT (15-18). With no 5 card suit pass would also be my choice. And what about East's 1NT at (2). Anybody who reads the news-sheets knows that 1♠ is correct. This East player does not bother to read the news-sheets and so will presumably continue to miss 4-4 major suit fits. 3NT at (3) promises a much better hand, I believe that this West was confused.

Anyway, the reason I included this hand was not the bidding (we all know not to deny a 4 card major and that this 3NT bid promises 19+ points or preferably a good long suit) but the opening lead. What do you lead from the South hand? He quite reasonably chose a ♥, but which one? He led a 4th best ♥8, dummy played low and North was in a spot. Should he play low and thus keep the king sitting over the queen or should he pop up with the king which would make life easy for declarer if he holds the ace. The answer is that North should never have been put in this predicament; the correct lead from the South hand is the ♥J, top of an internal (near) sequence.

What happened? N-S eventually came to just one ♥ trick instead of 4 off the top and so the contract went just two down with East thus salvaging an average score. And other tables? 2♠ was reached twice but one E-W pair managed to play in a silly 2♦ going -3.

Transfer!

Board 10 from Monday 17th, both vul.

North (B) South

♠ A83 ♠ J542
♥ Q8642 ♥ AJ
♦ 83 ♦ A92
♣ 963 ♣ KQJ8

Table A:

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

Table B:

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

We all know to transfer with a 5 card major, don't we?

Table A: This pair most certainly play transfers. Why a *very* experienced player (indeed, one who often criticises other players in the club) does not realise that one should transfer with hands like this is beyond me.

Table B: This, of course, is how the hand should be bid.

What happened? 2♥ was bid twice and made +1 for the joint top. 2♠ was bid once and made exactly, the booby prize went to our intrepid experts who played in 1NT just making.

The bottom line. When you have a weak hand and a 5 card major opposite partner's 1NT opening, transfer! You may end up in a 5-2, 5-3, 5-4 or even 5-5 fit, but even a 5-2 fit will usually play better than 1NT as dummy is useless in a NT contract. Indeed, this hand is a perfect example, it's a 5-2 fit ♥ but made 2 more tricks in ♥'s than in NT. And I don't think that people who do not understand this and bid like Table A are really qualified to continually criticise everybody? Agreed?

Counting Cards

Now here I am not concerned with keeping track during play, only Hans and Chuck do that, but what one should do at the start of every hand. The rules (and common sense) are very clear here. Remove the cards from the board and count them, face down, **before you look at them**. I did a survey on Friday: -

Alex, Dave, Bob, Richard (UK), Kenneth, Wendy, John G, John, and Sheila all passed with 100% and counted their hand face down. Hans was not quite perfect but usually did so. Chuck was, I'm afraid to say, only about 50%. The others (Ian, Richard (US), Kees, Jan and Mike) failed totally and always looked at their hand and then either counted or not – but it's too late! If you look at your hand and discover that you have too many cards, then the rules clearly state that you should be penalised! If you play the hand with 12 or 14 cards then that really is silly. I think that it should be drinks all round if anybody does this again, agreed?

Now I realise that a 'procedural penalty' means nothing at our club (who really cares if they end up 5% or 10% behind Chuck?) but it really does make life easier (especially for me, and that's what *counts* – excuse the pun). So please obey the rules and count your cards before looking at them.

I can even recall one distinguished player (Chuck of course) playing out a hand whilst sitting on (literally) the ♦A! I was asked to adjudicate if there had been a revoke!

Over the top – part 1Board 23 from Monday 17th, both vul

North	South (J)	West	North	East	South
♠ 10983	♠ 752	-	-	-	1♥
♥ AJ	♥ KQ743	pass	1♠	pass	2♠ (1)
♦ A1096	♦ KQ54	pass	4♠ (2)	all pass	
♣ Q95	♣ K				

4♠ went two down for a bottom, what went wrong? The first two bids are obvious but what is your rebid at (1)? North's 1♠ bid only promises 4 cards; it is often correct to support with just three cards, especially with a singleton. But with this South hand I would rebid 2♦ because: the ♠ suit is so poor, the ♦ suit is very respectable and the singleton is a king.

And North's jump to 4♠ at (2)? With just 11 points and no ♠ honours 3♠ is quite sufficient if you want to raise ♠'s. But actually the best bid is either 2NT or 3NT: -

If you feel that the North hand has only invitational values then bid 2NT– showing just 4 trumps and offering 2NT or 3NT as alternative contracts. And if you feel that the North hand, with its excellent intermediates is worth game, then 3NT at (2) is the bid.

And what happened? 4♠ went two down and was the only –ve score for N-S.

The bottom line. It's nice to have at least one honour in the trump suit between the two hands when you are at the game level. A 4-3 fit with no trump honours will not play well.

Over the top – part 2Board 24 from Monday 17th, both vul

North (K)	South (A)	West	North	East	South
♠ J8	♠ A10532	pass	pass	pass	1♠
♥ AJ75	♥ 9	pass	1NT	pass	3NT (1)
♦ 108432	♦ KQ	all pass			
♣ Q8	♣ AK962				

It's the same pair on the very next board!

3NT went down, anything wrong? Yes. When you open 1♠ and partner responds 1NT you need a good hand to raise. The raise to 2NT is about 17-18 points and 3NT is 19-20. This South hand is a decent 16 points with two 5 card suits – but the ♦KQ are bad and the singleton ♥ is not good for no trumps. This hand is not even good enough to raise to 2NT and should simply bid 2♣ over partner's 1NT. North should then give preference back to 2♠ and that's a very decent spot.

What happened? Only Kenneth/David reached 2♠ and that was the only + score and so an outright top. All of the other 3 pairs reached 3NT and went one or two down.

The bottom line. After 1♥/♠ - 1NT, 2NT is 17-18 pts, 3NT is 19+.

Incidentally, these ranges are not my concoction but are generally agreed as best. You will occasionally miss games when responder has 9 points and opener has 15 or 16 (but if you bid 2NT with just 16 points you will be in trouble if responder has just 6) – the higher your opening bid, the more difficult it is for responder and the 1NT response to 1♥/♠ can mean virtually anything.

This possibly missing game is not generally a problem with the strong NT as all balanced 15-16 point hands will have opened 1NT. It is, however, a problem when you play the weak NT. That's just one reason why I do not like to play 4 card majors. I personally feel that you should only open a 4 card major if you have 17+ points (so that you can raise a 1NT response) but that is not an established system as far as I know.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: 2♣. Not good enough for 2NT (17-18 points) or 3♣ which is game forcing. I suspect that some European/British players may have chosen 3♣? But this is generally played a game forcing by most players and this hand is no good enough.
- Hand B: 2♦, a transfer. Do not pass, your 5 card suit will play much better as trumps, even if declarer turns up with just two of them.
- Hand C: (a) 1♣. Nowhere good enough for 2NT which is 20-21 or 20-22.
(b) 2NT or 2♠? Which? The answer is that it is up to your partnership understanding. I would recommend 2♠ if you do not play Checkback Stayman over 2NT.
- Hand D: 3♥. A little too good for 2♥. Not good enough for 2♦ followed by 4♥. 4♥ directly is a weaker hand with (usually) 5 ♥'s and I would never bid 4♥ with two aces. 2♦ followed by 3♥ shows just 3 card support.
- Hand E: 3♣ or 3♥. The hand is too good for a simple 2♣ overcall. I don't like to double 1♥ with just 4 ♠'s. I guess that double is reasonable if you intend to bid ♣'s over partner's anticipated ♠ response, but it's simplest to bid 3♣ now, this is not a weak bid in the pass out seat. 3♥ is another option, it asks partner to bid 3NT with a ♥ stop.
- Hand G: 5♣. A cue bid. Bidding Blackwood is not recommended when you have a weak doubleton or if you have a void.
- Hand F: (a) 1♥. This is better than 2NT because you have an easy (3♣) rebid.
(b) 4♠. LHO has 'stolen' your rebid, but partner's response at the two level promises a 5+ card suit and so you can support at the game level with only 3 cards. There are other options (such as a 3♣ cuebid) but 4♠ keeps it simple.
- Hand H: The answer depends upon your partnership style.
If your partner will never rebid 2NT with a 4 card ♠ suit but will bid 2♠ instead then obviously you bid 3NT.
But what do you do if your style is for opener to rebid 2NT with 4333, 4243 or similar shape (4 ♠'s)? Obviously this is a very sensible style, but it is bypassing a 4 card major and if your partnership does this then you have to subsequently find a possible 4-4 ♠ fit. So should this hand bid 3♠ now? No! This cannot work because partner will then not know if you have a 5 card ♥ suit or just 4. If you adopt this style of bidding 2NT even with 4 ♠'s, then you also have to play Checkback Stayman (or New Minor forcing). If this all seems a bit alien/advanced to you then don't bypass the 4 card major.
- Hand J: 2♦. At least that is what I would bid in preference to 2♠. It is often wise to support partner with 3 card support and a singleton, but in this case the support is miserable, the singleton is pretty good and the ♦'s are a decent 2nd suit.
- Hand K: 2♠. Simple preference back to partner's first suit. This does not show any extra values. 2♦ or 2♥ would show a weak hand but with a 6+ card suit. If you chose 2NT then you need to have a word with me after standing in the corner.

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.

Monday 31/5/04

Friday 4/6/04

1st Richard (UK)/Terry 60%
 2nd Ian/Kees 59%

1st Kenneth/Alex 64%
 2nd = Richard(US)/Mike 58%
 2nd = Hans/Jan 58%

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

Hand A Hand B What do you open with Hand A?

♠ 108 ♠ AK7
 ♥ AKQ8632 ♥ KJ10962
 ♦ - ♦ AK93
 ♣ AJ95 ♣ -

What do you open with Hand B?

Hand C Hand D What do you open with Hand C?

♠ 3 ♠ AK864
 ♥ AKJ95 ♥ K7
 ♦ AQJ432 ♦ Q4
 ♣ J ♣ A974

With Hand D partner opens 1NT. You transfer and partner obediently bids 2♠. What do you bid now?

Hand E Hand F With Hand E LHO opens 1♥ and this is passed round to you. What do you do in 4th seat?

♠ Q1054 ♠ J6
 ♥ Q73 ♥ Q
 ♦ J72 ♦ 986
 ♣ Q64 ♣ AQ109652

With Hand F LHO opens 1♥ and this is passed round to you. What do you do in 4th seat?

Hand G Hand H With Hand G you open 1♦ and partner responds 2♣. RHO then bids 2♠, what do you do?

♠ KQ103 ♠ QJ1095
 ♥ KQ4 ♥ KQ32
 ♦ AJ985 ♦ J5
 ♣ 3 ♣ 94

With Hand H partner opens 1NT, (a) what do you bid. (b) suppose that you transfer with 2♥ and partner obediently bids 2♠, what now?

Play Quiz

Dealer: ♠ Q976
 South ♥ Q42
 N-S vul ♦ A9874
 ♣ 6

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

♠ K1083 N
 ♥ AK8 W E
 ♦ KJ10 S
 ♣ 953

This is the hand that caused all the controversy (see next page). You are North and West is the dummy. Partner leads the ♣Q which declarer (East) wins with the ♣A. Declarer then leads the ♠J which you win with the ♠Q. What card do you return?

Another One Bites the Dust.

There was a bit of a rumpus on Friday 28th when John Gavens was very rude towards his partner John Bourne, which resulted in John B walking out of the club. After the session I had a word with the other players who were at the table and it became obvious that John G had behaved very badly. Now this is not the first time that he has done this sort of thing and so, after studying the board in dispute, I wrote a personal warning (reproduced below) to John G and gave it to him on Monday 31st. John read it and said that he did not accept it and he also walked out. Fine. Anyway, here's the note I wrote; it was not intended for public consumption, but since John G has left us I feel that people may wish to know why. Who knows, some may even suggest that I was heavy handed? :-

Be Polite to Partner

Board 15 from Friday 28th

Dealer:	♠ Q976				
South	♥ Q42	West	North	East	South
N-S vul	♦ A9874	-	-	-	pass
	♣ 6	1♦	pass	1NT	all pass
♠ K1083	N	♠ J5	I'm not sure, but I assume that this was the		
♥ AK8	W E	♥ 965	bidding.		
♦ KJ10	S	♦ 653			
♣ 953		♣ AK874			
	♠ A42				
↑	♥ J1073				
dummy	♦ Q2				
	♣ QJ102				

This is, as I understand it, what happened: - South led the ♣Q which East won. The ♠J was then led and this was won by North's ♠Q.

♠ 976 North is now on lead with this holding, what should he lead? Obviously a ♠
♥ Q42 looks very unattractive, so it's ♥ or a ♦. Which is the best bet?
♦ A9874 If declarer has the ♥J then a ♥ lead gives away a trick. But if declarer has the
♣ - ♦Q then a ♦ lead costs nothing. And if partner has the ♦Q it still does not cost
as declarer will finesse it anyway (the % play with KJ10 in dummy is to finesse
the Q). So, I believe that North's decision to lead a ♦ is correct, but that really is not the issue. I believe
that you made remarks about this lead that were *totally* out of order? And also against the rules. Now, as
you know, you have been associated with this sort of behaviour before (Thorlief and Dave) but I will not
accept any repeat. If you are rude to *anybody* in the club in future then you will be requested to leave.

Incidentally, do you agree with my analysis? Either way I believe that you owe John an apology.

So that is the note. John G disagreed with it and, just like with his partner's ♦ lead, he said 'I do not accept it'. Up to him. I believe that my reaction to John G's behaviour was the least I could do, agreed?

A take out double?Board 9 from Monday 31st

Dealer: ♠ 964
 North ♥ K62
 E-W vul ♦ 1052
 ♣ AJ98

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

♠ A1085	N	♠ KJ32
♥ A1073	W E	♥ 84
♦ 976	S	♦ KJ8
♣ 32		♣ K765
	♠ Q7	
	♥ QJ95	
	♦ AQ43	
	♣ Q104	

(1) playing 4 card majors

This was not a success for E-W (it made), anything wrong? Yes. The double at (2) is a take-out double of ♥'s and is not penalties (it also cannot be penalties as East is a passed hand). With a 4 card ♠ suit, West should bid 2♠ at (3).

And what happened? 1NT doubled made exactly for a top. At another table E-W made 2♠ +1.

A 4 level pre-empt?Board 3 from Monday 31st

Dealer: ♠ AKQ762
 South ♥ 107
 E-W vul ♦ Q1075
 ♣ 2

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

♠ 108	N	♠ 5
♥ AKQ8632	W E	♥ 94
♦ -	S	♦ KJ842
♣ AJ95		♣ KQ743
	♠ J943	
	♥ J5	
	♦ A963	
	♣ 1086	

4♠ went one down but was a clear top as E-W have 12 tricks in ♣'s or ♥'s. So what went wrong? This West hand has about 8½ - 9 tricks and if you believe the people (Hans) who say that this hand is what you need for a pre-empt when vulnerable then please continue to do so, especially if you are playing against me. This West hand is far too good for any kind of pre-empt, including 4♥. It's a strong two if you play them, otherwise either 1♥ or 2♣.

And what happened? Nobody bid the ♥ slam; one was in 4♥ and two in 5♥. But one of these got an easy top when North doubled 5♥! Did he really expect to make 2 or 3 ♠ tricks against 5♥?? I'd be happy to make just one.

5-4 (or 4-5) in the Majors opposite 1NT

Board 3 from Fri 4th, E-W 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?

Yes, I know, this is copied from last week's news-sheet, when I said that either option is playable (as long as that's the option that you agree). But what do you do with just invitational values? I did not explain that and unfortunately one player found a completely unsound 3rd option at Table A on Friday.

West	East (H)	<u>Table A</u>		<u>Table B</u>	
♠ K43	♠ QJ1095	West	East	West	East
♥ A9875	♥ KQ32	1NT	2♥	1NT	2♣
♦ A102	♦ J5	2♠	3♠ (1)	2♥	3♥ (2)
♣ A8	♣ 94	4♠	pass	pass (3)	

Now last week I explained about bidding 5-4's in the majors when holding a game forcing hand opposite partner's opening 1NT. The first thing to consider is, is this East hand worth a game force? It's close, but with two excellent majors I would consider it a game forcing hand. My preferred method is to bid Stayman and then raise a 2♥ or 2♠ response to game and jump to 3♠ (forcing, showing 5 ♠'s and 4 ♥'s) over a 2♦ response.

Fine, but both of these East's presumably considered the hand as only invitational. How does one bid invitational 5-4's? That is not so easy!

Table A: At Table A East chose to transfer but I don't know what he meant by his 3♠ bid? 3♠ at (1) shows a 6 card suit and is invitational. If you consider the East hand to be worth game, then bid 3♥, game forcing. If you consider it only worth an invitation then you have no choice but to bid 2NT now; the ♥ suit is then lost, that's why it's best to bid Stayman.

Table B: They got off to the best start here. East bid correctly if he considers his hand as invitational. West has a minimum point count but with 3 aces, a 10, excellent ♥ intermediates and 5 card ♥ support, I would accept the game invitation at (3).

And what happened? ♥ contracts scored 11 tricks and 4♠ scored 10 tricks.

The bottom lines.

- Even with the use of transfers and Stayman there are not quite enough sequences to simply show every responding major two-suiter hand type (5-5, 5-4 and 4-5) when weak, invitational and strong.
- Some players incorporate the jumps to 3♥ and 3♠ but the best scheme is described in the NT bidding book

Balance in 4th seat? – part 1Board 18 from Friday 4th

Dealer: ♠ 983
 East ♥ 85
 N-S vul ♦ Q104
 ♣ AK972

♠ AK7 N ♠ J62
 ♥ KJ10962 W E ♥ A4
 ♦ AK93 S ♦ 865
 ♣ - ♣ J10853
 ♠ Q1054
 ♥ Q73
 ♦ J72
 ♣ Q64

Table A

West (B)	North	East	South (E)
-	-	pass	pass
1♥ (1)	pass	pass (2)	dbl (3)
2♥ (4)	pass	pass (5)	pass

Table B

West (B)	North	East	South
-	-	pass	pass
2♣	pass	2♦	pass
2♥	pass	3♣	pass
3♦	pass	3NT (6)	pass
4♥	pass	pass	pass

4♥ is a comfortable contract (it should make +1), what happened at Table A?

Table A: What did you open with hand B in this week's quiz? The hand has about 9 playing tricks and is worth a 2♣ opener. Anyway, this West elected to open 1♥. Should East say something? 6 points and the ace of partner's suit is surely worth a bid, I would bid 1NT. Anyway, the 1♥ bid was passed round to South, do you make a noise? 7 points is enough to balance and a 4 card ♠ suit makes it attractive. I guess that double is acceptable but, with nothing but quacks, so is pass.

Anyway, this gave West another shot and I would be tempted to bid 4♥ at (4) (teach 'em a lesson), but then I would have opened 2♣. Anyway, West bid just 2♥, so should East say anything this time? I would, South does not have much (he is a passed hand) and partner's 2♥ shows a non-minimum. North does not have much (he has passed twice). Where is all the power? Somebody at the table is being very conservative and it can only be West.

Table B: They got this right, although I would prefer 4♥ at (6) with 66% of my points in partner's 1st suit (the other suits are far too weak to suggest NT).

The bottom lines. With 9 playing tricks, open a strong bid. If partner has opened and you have passed (showing less than 6 points) then you are free to bid if you get a second chance (you have already shown a poor hand).

Acol Bidding Quiz

What would you open with these hands if playing Acol?!

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4	Hand 5	Hand 6
♠ Q7	♠ Q7	♠ Q7	♠ Q7	♠ QJ95	♠ QJ95
♥ QJ95	♥ QJ95	♥ QJ95	♥ AQJ9	♥ AJ95	♥ AJ95
♦ AQ43	♦ AQ43	♦ AQ1043	♦ AQ1043	♦ 6	♦ Q6
♣ Q104	♣ KQ10	♣ Q4	♣ Q4	♣ AQJ4	♣ AJ4

Answers at the end of this news-sheet.

Balance in 4th seat? – part 2Board 16 from Friday 4th

Dealer:	♠ AQ42	
West	♥ 10732	
E-W vul	♦ K75	
	♣ K4	
♠ 3	N	♠ K109875
♥ AKJ95	W E	♥ 864
♦ AQJ432	S	♦ 10
♣ J		♣ 873
	♠ J6	
	♥ Q	
	♦ 986	
	♣ AQ109652	

<u>Table A</u>			
West (C)	North	East	South (F)
1♥	pass	pass	3♣
3♦	pass	3♥	pass
4♥	pass	pass	pass

<u>Table B</u>			
West (C)	North	East	South
2♣	pass	2♦	pass
2♥ (1)	pass	2♠	pass
3♦	pass	4♥	pass
pass	pass		

The Table A pairs were the same as in part 1, and it's rock-crusher opener coupled with a dubious bid in 4th seat yet again.

Table A: What did you open with hand C in this week's quiz? The hand has about 9 playing tricks and is worth a 2♣ opener. Anyway, this West again elected to open 1♥. This was again passed round to South, do you make a noise? A better hand than last time but the ♥Q is probably useless. Pass is a real alternative (it perhaps depends upon the styles of partner and the E-W players) but 2♣ is OK I guess. But one bid that is not fine is a 'weak' 3♣. There is no such thing as a weak jump overcall in 4th seat. 3♣ here is strong, showing a much better hand (see news-sheet 81 for an example). Anyway, West got another chance and the easy game was reached.

Table B: This was very sensible bidding. It's normally best to bid a 6 card suit before a 5 carder, but the bidding would get uncomfortably high here.

The bottom lines.

There is no such thing as a weak bid in the pass-out seat. – News-sheet 81. Be wary of balancing in 4th seat with weak ♠'s.

If you have a hand that is so good that you would feel sick if an opening one level bid was passed out – then don't open with a one level bid!

A Non-NT rebid promises 5 of the 1st suit

Board 19 from Monday 31st, N-S vul

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ 863	♠ QJ953	-	-	-	pass
♥ A965	♥ K8	pass	pass	1♠ (1)	pass
♦ J3	♦ AK764	1NT (2)	pass	2♦ (3)	pass
♣ J975	♣ K	2♥ (4)	pass	pass	pass

Obviously a silly contract, where did the wheels come off? The pair were playing Acol and the first two bids are obvious whatever system you play. 1NT is correct at (2) as it does not have enough for a two level bid. Now 1♠ at (1) could have been a 4 card suit, but once the rebid at (3) is another suit then this guarantees that the first bid suit was a five carder when playing Acol. And what should 2♥ at (4) show? In any system it shows a weak hand with 6+ ♥'s. With a weak hand and less ♥'s West should either pass or put opener back into his 5 card ♠ suit. Obviously 2♠ is correct here. And what happened? 2♥ made scoring 110 but every other E-W pair were in ♠'s scoring 140.

Open a 4 card major when playing Acol?

As there are a number of Acol players in the club just now so I'll just summarize when you open 4 card majors. You only open a 4 card major if your rebid is NT, thus when the hand has 15 or more points. And, as I said above, if you rebid in a suit then that guarantees that the 1st bid suit was a 5 carder.

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4	Hand 5	Hand 6
♠ Q7	♠ Q7	♠ Q7	♠ Q7	♠ QJ95	♠ QJ95
♥ QJ95	♥ QJ95	♥ QJ95	♥ AQJ9	♥ AJ95	♥ AJ95
♦ AQ43	♦ AQ43	♦ AQ1043	♦ AQ1043	♦ 6	♦ Q6
♣ Q104	♣ KQ10	♣ Q4	♣ Q4	♣ AQJ4	♣ AJ4

- Hand 1: We met this hand earlier, an Acol player incorrectly opened 1♥. This is wrong because you then have no rebid over, say, 1♠. 1NT would show 15-16 points and 2♣ or 2♦ would promise 5 ♥'s. The correct opening is 1NT.
- Hand 2: Slightly stronger now. This time the correct opening playing Acol is 1♥ as your rebid is 1NT over 1♠ and 2NT over 2♣/♦.
- Hand 3: You may choose to open this 1NT. If you choose 1♦ then you cannot rebid 1NT over 1♠ (that shows 15-16 points in Acol) and so you have to rebid the ♦'s.
- Hand 4: This time you have enough points to open the 4 card major (you can jump rebid in NT) but with this shape it's best to reverse (16+ points). So open 1♦ and rebid 2♥ over 1♠/1NT/2♣.
- Hand 5: This one is tricky (4441 type hand are tricky in most systems). You have the values for a 4 card major opening but not the shape for a NT rebid. With this one I would open 1♣ playing Acol. If you open 1♥ and partner responds 1NT you cannot then bid 2♣ or 2♠ as that would promise 5 ♥'s; and if you open 1♠ and rebid 2♣ or 2♥ then that promises 5 ♠'s.
- Hand 6: This time you can open a 4 card major as you have a NT rebid. Open 1♥ and rebid 2NT over 2♣/♦. Note that you should not open 1♠ as then a ♥ fit may be lost (a 2♥ rebid would promise 5 ♠'s).

No Jacks

Board 16 from Monday 31st, E-W vul

North	South (D)	West	North	East	South
♠ 953	♠ AK864	pass	1NT (1)	pass	2♥
♥ AQ4	♥ K7	pass	2♠	pass	4♠ (2)
♦ AK1093	♦ Q4	all pass			
♣ K8	♣ A974				

A comfortable 6♠ slam was missed, just unlucky or was anyone to blame?

Now this one is tricky as there is no blatantly obvious culprit. The 1NT opening at (1)? It's 16 points but worth much more. A 5 card suit headed by the AK is an excellent +, as are the 10,9 in the suit. Two aces and no jacks are a definite + also. Whether that all adds up to too strong for a 1NT opening is debatable. So let's say it absolutely top of the range but acceptable.

Then what about South's 4♠ at (2)? 16 points, but again very good ones. A 5 card suit headed by the AK is a good +, and an outside 4-carder headed by the ace is another +. Two aces and no jacks are a definite + also. This hand is worth 17+.

So it's 17 + 15-17. 32 is usually only good enough for slam if there is a fit but South did not know that North had 3 ♠'s. Could he have done anything else?

Yes! The correct bid at (2) is 3♣. A 2nd suit and game forcing. North then has a few options but if he simply bid 3♠ that would show 3 card support and slam interest (slow arrival). That's all South needs and the slam is then easy.

And what happened? Two pairs did bid the slam. Well done chaps.

The bottom lines.

- Jacks are the most over-rated cards in the deck. Add on a good + for a jackless hand. Note that the addition of 3 jacks (♣, ♦ & ♥) to these hands would not affect the outcome! Aces and kings are equally under-rated. Add on a + for two aces. Add on a big big + for 5 card suits headed by the AK.
- If partner opens 1NT and you have a game forcing two suiter with a 5 card major, transfer and then bid the other suit.
- If you have opened 1NT and partner transfers and bids another suit (so game forcing), 3 of the major is encouraging; 3NT denies 3 card support for the major (and shows good guards in the two unbid suits) and 4 of the major usually shows 3 card support but is discouraging.
- A jump to game in a game forcing situation is fast arrival and is weaker than the slow approach.

Nobody bids game!

Board 17 from Friday 4th

Dealer: ♠ KQ103
North ♥ KQ4
Love all ♦ AJ985
♣ 3

Table A

West	North (G)	East	South
-	1♦	pass	2♣
2♠	pass (1)	pass	pass (2)

♠ J97654 N ♠ -
♥ J7 W E ♥ A9832
♦ KQ6 S ♦ 107
♣ QJ ♣ 986542
♠ A82
♥ 1065
♦ 432
♣ AK107

Table B

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

Table C

-	1♦	pass	2♣
pass	2♦ (3)	pass	pass (5)
pass			

3NT is a very reasonable contract for N-S yet all three tables played in part-scores on Friday. Let's have a look: -

- Table A: What did you do with hand G at (1) in this week's quiz? Unless you have agreed to the contrary, double is most definitely penalties here. I have gone all through this in past news-sheets (17 & 44); partner has shown values (11+) and you are sitting over the overcaller, ergo penalties. It will be a glorious massacre, you really should be able to teach people a lesson when they overcall at the two level with suits like this when you have shown the power. If you play Support Doubles (as far as I know nobody but Chuck does) then you have to pass at (1) and South should re-open with a double at (2).
- Table B: Now then, what do you rebid at (3) when there is no intervention? 2♠ is a reverse and is game forcing, South cannot pass at (4).
- Table C: This depends upon your partnership style. 2♦ is reasonable if you need more for a reverse and I would expect partner to make another bid at (5) having responded at the two level.

What happened? 2♠ by North made +1. 2♠ by West (undoubled!) went minus three. 2♦ by North made +2. Nobody bid 3NT, in fact nobody even bid NT or any sort of game.

The bottom lines.

- A reverse is forcing. A reverse after a two level response is forcing to game.
- The modern style in Standard American is that if you respond at the two level then you promise another bid.
- Check up on penalty doubles. In this situation a double at (1) is penalties unless you have specifically agreed otherwise (and if you do agree otherwise, then partner must re-open with a double at (2)).

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: 2♣ or 1♥. It's probably good enough for a game forcing 2♣, but 1♥ (followed by a game forcing 3♣) is also perfectly reasonable. What is not reasonable is any sort of pre-empt including 4♥, this hand is way too strong.
- Hand B: 2♣. This hand is too strong for 1♥.
- Hand C: 2♣. Again, too strong for 1♦ or 1♥.
- Hand D: 3♣. Game forcing.
- Hand E: I would pass.
- Hand F: Either 2♣ or pass. 3♣ is not an option, it shows a strong hand – there is no such animal as a pre-empt in the pass-out seat.
- Hand G: Double. 'Standard' is to play this as penalties – you are sitting over the bidder.
- Hand H: (a) I would consider this hand game forcing. My preferred method with 4-5 or 5-4 in the majors is to bid Stayman and then jump to 3 of the long major if partner responds 2♦. If you consider the hand only invitational, then also bid Stayman; raise 2♥/♠ to 3♥/♠ and bid 2NT over a 2♦ response.
- (b) But transferring works equally well if you consider it game forcing. If you transfer then your 2nd bid must be 3♥. This shows 5 ♠'s & 4♥'s and is game forcing unless you have a specific agreement to the contrary. If you consider the hand only invitational then transferring does not work as you then cannot show the ♥ suit without forcing to game.

Play Quiz Answer

A low ♦. A ♠ is unattractive. A ♥ will work if partner has the ♥J but will give away a trick unnecessarily if declarer has the ♥J. A low ♦, however, cannot cost. If declarer has the ♦Q it costs nothing and if partner has that card then declarer will obviously finesse it later.

Acol Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand 1: 1NT
- Hand 2: 1♥
- Hand 3: 1♦ (or 1NT if that's your style).
- Hand 4: 1♦
- Hand 5: 1♣
- Hand 6: 1♥

Monday 7/6/04

Friday 11/6/04

1st Terry/Mike(Can) 55%
 2nd Richard/Richard 53%

1st Kenneth/John 69%
 2nd Richard(UK)/Dave 60%

The John who won on Friday is not the John who walked out because of the other John, nor the other John who subsequently also walked out because I said he was wrong to be rude to the 1st John, but another British John who travels by motorbike.

Numbers are coming down now, but 3 full tables on Friday is good for this time of year. Incidentally, 69% and 60% are really excellent scores for just 3 tables and 20 boards, the norm for a win with just 3 tables is around 55%.

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

Hand A Hand B With Hand A partner opens 1♥ and RHO overcalls 1♠, what is your bid?

♠ AK842 ♠ KQ
 ♥ J62 ♥ A9
 ♦ 95 ♦ J1098
 ♣ J42 ♣ QJ983

(a) Do you open with hand B?
 (b) Suppose that you open 1♣, what do you rebid over partner's 1♦?

Hand C Hand D With hand C partner opens 1♣ and RHO overcalls 1NT (15-18), what do you do?

♠ AJ9 ♠ J10975
 ♥ J5 ♥ K8
 ♦ 109642 ♦ AQ74
 ♣ A87 ♣ K5

With Hand D RHO opens 1♥ and you overcall 1♠. LHO bids 1NT and partner bids 2♠. RHO bids 3♦, what do you bid?
 So: 1♥ 1♠ 1NT 2♠
 3♦ ?

Hand E Hand F What do you open with Hand E?

♠ KJ87 ♠ 1073
 ♥ AQJ10 ♥ KQ5
 ♦ A97 ♦ AK54
 ♣ AK ♣ Q54

With Hand F partner opens 1♥, what do you bid?

Hand G Hand H With Hand G partner opens 2NT, do you bid?

♠ Q102 ♠ A43
 ♥ 54 ♥ 10653
 ♦ Q1053 ♦ -
 ♣ 10983 ♣ J98765

With Hand H partner opens 1NT and RHO overcalls 2♠. What do you do?

Hand J Hand K What do you open with Hand J?

♠ J8 ♠ 65
 ♥ A92 ♥ AKJ8
 ♦ AKJ ♦ A985
 ♣ A7432 ♣ A74

What do you open with Hand K?

Obey the Law part 1

Board 18 from Monday 7th

Dealer:	♠ Q63				
East	♥ Q53	West (A)	North	East	South (D)
N-S vul	♦ J10	-	-	1♥	1♠ (1)
	♣ Q10983	1NT (2)	2♠ (3)	3♦ (4)	3♠ (5)
		dbl	all pass		
♠ AK842	N	♠ -			
♥ J62	W E	♥ A10974			
♦ 95	S	♦ K8632			
♣ J42		♣ A76			
	♠ J10975				
	♥ K8				
	♦ AQ74				
	♣ K5				

This went for 500 on a partscore deal, what went wrong?

As is often the case in these competitive situations, one only needs a basic knowledge of The Law. South's overcall at (1) is acceptable, although some may prefer a better suit. And West's bid at (2)? Some may prefer a penalty pass (playing negative doubles) but with three cards in partner's suit most would choose to bid. I would prefer 2♥ but I guess 1NT would be the choice of a few. North has 3 card support and 2♠ at (3) is obviously fine. This puts East in a spot; does 3♦ at (4) show a good hand and is it forcing?

I asked West after the game was over, and he confirmed that he thought that 3♦ was forcing. Anyway, what about South's 3♠ bid at (5)? This hand has enough points, but that is **totally** irrelevant. The only thing that matters in these evenly matched competitive situations is the total number of trumps. South can only be sure of 8 trumps and so he **must** pass. There are also a couple of other compelling reasons why South should pass. E-W are up at the three level thanks to partner's bid; it may well be too high (it was) but what's more East's bid was forcing! Who knows how high E-W would have got? And this South hand is a superb hand for defence.

And what happened? N-S (or rather South) got his deserved total bottom instead of an outright top. At other tables E-W were in *two level* partscores, all going down.

The bottom lines.

- 1- Obey the Law. In this particular case when you have overcalled with a 5 card suit, do **not bid again** if partner simply raises. Unless you have enough points to try for game, your point count is immaterial. The over-riding factor is the number of trumps. If you do happen to have a 9 card fit, it is partner who knows this and he will bid to the three level.
- 2- When you have high honours in your suit(s), think offence; when you have high honours in the opponent's suit(s), think defence.
- 3- If you do not obey The Law and blindly bid on without trump length you will find that partners will not trust you. North's 2♠ bid here should have earned N-S an easy top – North would not support if he knew that partner would up the anti again with only 5 trumps, and it's no longer a partnership game. Some players (not me of course?) get upset when partners convert tops into bottoms with no sound reason.
- 4- Think! If it looks like opponents are in a tangle, don't let them off the hook. There's no need to 'push them up' if the last bid was forcing!

Obey the Law part 2

Board 17 from Friday 11th

Dealer: ♠ KQ63
 North ♥ K103
 Love all ♦ 2
 ♣ AQ986

♠ J10875 N ♠ A2
 ♥ A2 W E ♥ 965
 ♦ J943 S ♦ AK1075
 ♣ J2 ♣ 1054
 ♠ 94
 ♥ QJ874
 ♦ Q86
 ♣ K73

Table A:

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

Table B:

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	1♦	1♥
1♠	2♥ (6)	pass	pass
pass (7)			

Table C:

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	1♦	1♥
1♠	2♣ (8)	pass	pass
pass (9)			

Table A: Apparently West had not sorted his cards and did not realise that he had a ♠ suit, hence the 2♦ bid at (1). 2♥ at (2) is correct unless you play support doubles (I explain this below). And 3♦ at (3)? This is incorrect; West has only promised 3♦'s for his support, This East hand is nothing special and it's points are working equally well in defence. With only 5♦'s East should pass at (3) and then West would bid 3♦ at (5) as he has extra **length**. And South's pass at (4)? He has 5 trumps and should bid 3♥ if there is a combined 9 card ♥ fit – but is there? He does not know, the solution is to play Support Doubles but they are perhaps somewhat advanced. Let's get the basics right first, eh?

Table B: The first 4 bids are obvious, as is 2♥ at (6) if you do not play Support Doubles. All is then well up to (7); West has 4 card support for partner's 5 card ♦ suit and should bid 3♦ (9 combined trumps).

Table C: I guess it's not atrocious, but I don't like 2♣ at (8). When you have 3 card support and a singleton, even a Moysian fit will play very well and I would support ♥'s. West should, of course, bid 2♦ at (9) (and be prepared to go to 3♦ later).

Support Doubles. Perhaps a little complex, but if you are a great believer in The Law (as I am) then they tell you how many combined trumps your side has.

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

In this example North has two options at (1). A 2♥ bid promises 4♥'s and a double is a Support Double, promising exactly 3 card support. West should bid 3♦ at (2) (he knows about their combined 9♦'s). South now knows what to do at (3), if North had bid 2♥ at (1) then he can venture to the 3 level. But as he knows that North has just 3 card support then a pass at (3) is best. With a good defensive hand there is no need to go above the level of The Law.

And what happened? 3♦ went just one down for a top to E-W at Table A. 2♣ and 2♥ both made. The bottom lines? Obey the law: -

- I keep on saying it, in these competitive situations points are of secondary importance to the combined number of trumps (so East should not bid 3♦ but West should!).

Pass Out?

Board 18 from Friday 11th, love all.

West East (B)

♠ A93	♠ KQ
♥ K83	♥ A9
♦ K764	♦ J1098
♣ 652	♣ QJ983

Table A:

West	North	East	South
-	-	pass	pass
pass	pass		

Table B:

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

Table C:

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♣	pass
1♦	pass	2♦ (1)	all pass

Table A: So did you open with Hand B in this week's quiz? I hope so, apply the rule of 20 and it passes (excuse the pun – you know what I mean) with flying colours (13 pts + 9 for the two longest suits = 22). You can deduct a bit for KQ doubleton but there is adequate compensation with the excellent intermediates. J1098 is more than 1 point. A very clear opener.

Table B: So we decide to open 1♣ and partner bids 1♦, what did you rebid at (1) with Hand B in this week's quiz? A semi-balanced 13 count so 1NT? Reasonable, but I prefer East's choice at Table C.

Table C: This East chose a 2♦ rebid at (1), I agree. It's a known 4-4 (or better) fit and with two doubletons it must be best?

And what happened? 1NT made exactly and 2♦ made +1 for the top score. East's pass at Table A scored them a zero.

The bottom lines?

- If you are in doubt about opening in 1st, 2nd or 3rd seat then apply the rule of 20 (points + length of two longest suits).
- Support with support.

Raise a 2NT opener?

Board 2 from Friday 11th, N-S vul, dealer East.

North (G)

South (E)

Table A

North	South
-	2NT (1)
pass	

Table B

North	South
-	2NT (1)
3NT	pass

♠ Q102	♠ KJ87
♥ 54	♥ AQJ10
♦ Q1053	♦ A97
♣ 10983	♣ AK

What did you open with Hand E in this week's quiz? It's worth 2♣ (followed by 2NT) even if you play a 2NT opening as 20-22. And what did you respond with Hand G? 3NT I hope. With three 10's and excellent intermediates this hand is worth far more than 4 points.

And what happened? Two tables bid 3NT. The NT contracts made 9, 10 or 11 tricks.

The bottom lines. Add on for intermediates. A 10 is usually worth ½ a point. 1098x is worth more than ½ a point. The modern trend is to play a 2NT opener as 20-21 and 2♣ followed by 2NT as 22-24 (the 20-21 range is more frequent and so should be more precise).

Double and bid again shows a big hand

Board 1 from Friday 11th

Dealer: ♠ J8
North ♥ A92
Love all ♦ AKJ
♣ A7432

♠ 643 N ♠ AK102
♥ KQ63 W E ♥ J754
♦ Q3 S ♦ 10875
♣ Q985 ♣ J
♠ Q975
♥ 108
♦ 9642
♣ K106

Table A

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

Table B

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

Table A: Some strange stuff here. N-S play a strong NT and quite why North did not open one I don't know. Anyway, this let in East cheaply (nobody in their right mind would overcall a strong 1NT opener with this hand). West has an obvious 1♥ bid at (2) but exactly what East was doing at (3) I don't know. West's 1♥ bid is 0-9 points and an invitational 2♥ at (3) should be about 15-17 points; even with classic shape, 9 points really is silly. Luckily West bid only 3♥ at (4), with this maximum many would bid game – perhaps West knew his partner's eccentricities?

Table B: This North got it right, apart from everything else, a 1NT opener shuts out the opposition. A good board for the strong NT – provided you remember to open one!

And what happened? 3♥ was one down but got a good score as it was non-vul and N-S made 1NT at the other tables. No justice, eh?

The bottom lines.

- If you have a balanced hand within your NT range, open 1NT.
- Partner promises zero points (0-9) with a non-jump response to a take-out double.
- You need a good hand (15-17) to make an invitational raise of partner's minimum response to your take-out double.

2NT is too high

Board 14 from Friday 11th, love all.

North South (K)

♠ QJ742	♠ 65
♥ 4	♥ AKJ8
♦ J643	♦ A985
♣ Q102	♣ A74

Table A:

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

Table B:

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

Table C:

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

Table A: 2NT went minus two, anything wrong with the bidding?

Yes. If you play a strong NT then you have to open this South hand with 1NT at (1). If you do not you will run into difficulties later! At (2) South has no sensible rebid. The hand barely warrants a reverse, but it is the wrong shape. A reverse guarantees at least 5 cards in the first bid suit. And South is again in a pickle at (4), pass would be prudent. Mind you, since South's reverse promises 5+ ♦'s, I would have bid 3♦ at (3) and blundered into a good spot.

Table B: Very sensible.

Table C: Reasonably sensible, I would transfer as Table B.

What happened? 2NT went minus two for a clear bottom.

The bottom lines.

- If you have a balanced hand within your NT range, open 1NT.
- A reverse promises greater length in the 1st bid suit.
- There is a well known saying, you need strength for a reverse but do not reverse to show strength.

I note that this deal would be a very good one for the weak NT (and 5 card majors). The bidding would go 1♦ - 1♠ - 1NT - 2♦ - pass, the very best spot but difficult to reach with most systems.

The play's the thing - 1

North	South
♠ Q62	♠ AK3
♥ QJ10653	♥ K97
♦ K62	♦ 109597
♣ 5	♣ KQ42

With no opposition bidding you end up in 4♥. It does not matter which hand is declarer. You get a ♠ opening lead, where do you win and what do you lead next?

Answer on the next page.

The play's the thing 1 - Answer

Board 7 from Friday 11th

I have had a few comments suggesting that I do a little more about the play in the news-sheets. Unlike my bidding, which is pretty good, I do not pretend to be an expert declarer or defender. But I'll do my best - I'm sure that Hans or Chuck will correct me if I slip up, and I'm quite likely to when it comes to the play. Anyway, this hand came up on Friday and the declarer who went down asked how the others made it (one with an overtrick!). I have changed the board slightly to make it more straightforward as with the original board the contract had no chance against decent defence.

Dealer:	♠ Q62	<u>Table A</u>				
South	♥ QJ10653	West	North	East	South	
Both vul	♦ K62	-	-	-	1NT (1)	
	♣ 5	pass	2♦	pass	2♥	
		pass	4♥	all pass		
♠ J105	N	♠ 9874				
♥ A8	W E	♥ 42	<u>Table B</u>			
♦ AJ74	S	♦ Q83	West	North	East	South
♣ J983		♣ A1076	-	-	-	1♣
	♠ AK3		pass	2♥ (2)	pass	2♠ (3)
	♥ K97		pass	3♥	pass	4♥
	♦ 1095		pass			
	♣ KQ42					

All 3 tables got to 4♥ on Friday. The 1NT opening at (1) is borderline with the 4333 type shape, but the ♦ 109x is worth a bit and so it's not too bad. At Table 2 North's 2♥ bid at (2) is game forcing and should show a much stronger hand. Anyway, let's look at the play: -

Suppose that you are declaring the hand from North or South and get a ♠ lead. Where should you win and what should you do next?

You were fortunate not to get a ♦ lead, you have 3 sure losers (the 3 aces) and one or maybe two more ♦ losers, you have to attempt to get rid of ♦'s ASAP. Win in the North hand and lead the ♣5 towards the South hand. If East ducks then you have not lost a ♣ trick and the ♦A onside ensures success. If East goes up with the ♣A then you can subsequently discard one or two ♦'s on the ♣KQ.

The bottom line. It's usually best to draw trumps, but if it is imperative that you get losers away as quickly as possible then you may have to postpone this. In this case it's imperative to set up a ♣ winner early. If you lead a trump then a ♦ switch will kill you as the defence will subsequently win the ♣A and cash the setting ♦.

<u>The play's the thing - 2</u>		West	North	East	South
North	South	-	-	pass	1♠
		1NT (1)	2♠	pass	4♠
♠ A876	♠ J10932	pass	pass	pass	
♥ A10876	♥ -				
♦ 103	♦ QJ9	(1) 15-18			
♣ 76	♣ AKQJ3				

West leads the ♦A and then switches to the ♥K. Plan the play. Answer on the next page.

After the Monday game there are usually a few players who stay behind for a while to chat about some of the hands. I don't usually join in – when you have two people who both think that they are usually right but totally disagree about absolutely everything it tends to spoil the atmosphere. Anyway, I had to wait for the wife and so I had some time to pass....

Board 22 was mentioned. I said that I found it amazing that 3 of the 4 declarers went down in a totally solid contract. My adversary knew the board, he said that after the natural ♦A lead, a ♥K switch makes life difficult for declarer and the contract goes down. The only difficulty for declarer as far as I can see when West does not cash the ♦K at trick two is ensuring the overtrick! Let's have a look, this was the bidding at my table: -

Dealer:	♠ A876				
East	♥ A10876	West	North	East	South
E-W vul	♦ 103	-	-	pass	1 ♠
	♣ 76	1NT	2♠	pass	4♠
		pass (1)	pass	pass	
♠ KQ54	N	♠ -			
♥ KQ3	W E	♥ J9542			
♦ AK75	S	♦ 8642			
♣ 94		♣ 10852			
	♠ J10932				
	♥ -				
	♦ QJ9				
	♣ AKQJ3				

I don't know the bidding at the other three tables, I guess that it was the same except that every other West doubled the final contract.

Well then. At my table West led the ♦A and continued with the ♦K. The ♥K came next; declarer won in dummy and led the ♠A from dummy – down one.

In the discussion mentioned above my adversary stated that the contract is down if West switches to the ♥K at trick two. I **totally** disagree. Dummy wins and South discards ... it does not really matter, but a ♦ is probably best as this leads to a comfortable overtrick. Declarer then leads a ♣ to get to hand and leads the ♠9. There are now various permutations depending upon whether West covers or not. Let's say that he ducks the ♠9 but puts up the ♠Q on the next ♠. Dummy wins with the ♠A and the ♣7 is led back to hand.

	♠ 87				
	♥ 10876				
	♦ 10				
	♣ -				
♠ K5	N	♠			
♥ Q3	W E	♥ immaterial			
♦ K75	S	♦			
♣ -		♣			
	♠ J103				
	♥ -				
	♦ Q				
	♣ QJ3				

That leaves this position. South now leads the ♣Q and West is helpless. If he ruffs low then dummy over-ruffs, back to hand with a ♥ ruff and lead another ♣ on which the ♦10 is discarded – 11 tricks.

If West ruffs instead with the ♠K then the ♦10 is discarded and it's still 11 tricks.

If West does not ruff then South simply continues with ♣'s. It's always 11 tricks.

The bottom line. My analysis may or may not be perfect – I do not claim to be an expert declarer. But I most certainly would not have gone down!

All NT responses to partner's opening are Limit bids

A few people seem to have got this wrong in recent weeks: -

Suppose partner opens 1♣ or 1♦ or 1♥, then:

1NT by you shows 6-9 points, denies a 4 card major and is not forcing

2NT by you shows 11-12 points, denies a 4 card major and is **not** forcing

3NT by you shows 13-15 points, denies a 4 card major and is not forcing.

It's the same if partner opens 1♠ except that you may have a ♥ suit with a 1NT response.

4th suit forcing?

Board 21 from Friday 11th, N-S vul.

North South (F)

♠ AJ965 ♠ 1073
♥ A10873 ♥ KQ5
♦ J7 ♦ AK54
♣ J ♣ Q54

Table A:

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

Table B:

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

Table C:

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

Table A: 3NT was not pretty, what went wrong? The first 3 bids are obvious, but what should South bid at (1)? You have points for game but ♣Qxx is not good enough in the 4th suit to bid NT (you know that the opponents are going to lead this suit). If you want to probe 3NT then bid 3♣, 4th suit forcing, and partner will bid 3NT with a ♣ stop. However, partner's bidding has shown 5 ♠'s and 4+ ♥'s and I would simply bid 4♠ at (2) to play in the known 5-3 fit. Mind you, if I was North I would pull 3NT to 4♥ at (3) (showing 5 ♥'s) because the previous bidding only promised 4 ♥'s and this hand really is unsuitable for NT.

Table B: This South did not realise what I stated above about 2NT here being non-forcing, a forcing 2♦ is correct at (1) but the pair somehow landed on their feet.

Table C: This pair bid it correctly. One player did ask me how the slightly better 4♥ contract can be reached. It's not really that easy, North's 2♥ rebid only promises 4 ♥'s. Even if you try 4th suit forcing at (5) a 3♥ response would not guarantee a 5th ♥. You know that there is a 5-3 (maybe 6-3) ♠ fit so it's simplest to bid 4♠.

And what happened? 3NT was -3, 4♠ was +1.

The bottom lines?

- 5-3 major suit fits are usually better than NT if one player has a shapely hand.
- Remember 4th suit forcing if you are doubtful about a stop for NT.

When you have the balance of points and they bid NT, Double!

Board 15 from Monday 7th

Dealer:	♠ Q83	<u>Table A</u>				
South	♥ Q942	West	North	East	South (C)	
N-S vul	♦ A3	-	-	-	pass	
	♣ KJ102	pass	1♣	1NT (1)	2♦ (2)	
		pass	pass	pass		
♠ 7654	N	♠ K102				
♥ 10873	W E	♥ AK6	<u>Table B</u>			
♦ K5	S	♦ QJ87	West	North	East	South
♣ 653		♣ Q94	pass	1♣	1NT (1)	dbl (2)
	♠ AJ9		2♣ (3)	dbl	pass	pass
	♥ J5		2♦	pass	pass	dbl
	♦ 109642		redblall	pass		
	♣ A87					

One or more players at both tables got this wrong: -

Table A: 1NT at (1) is 15-18 points whatever system you play. But is it correct here? I guess that most players would like to bid but the 4333 type shape dictates caution. Pass is probably more prudent but I guess that 1NT is acceptable. But what about South's 2♦ bid? This is not (acceptable). What did you do with Hand C in this week's quiz? You really just have to think here at (2); partner has opened the bidding (usually around 13+ points), you have 10 points (and some decent intermediates). The opponents are not going to make 1NT – so double! After such a penalty double you're out for blood and any subsequent doubles by you or partner are also for penalties. E-W have nowhere to go.

Table B: This South got it right. I'm not sure exactly what went on after this, I believe that the 2♣ and 2♦ bids were trying to wriggle out into the best major but East did not see it that way. All bids after a double are best played as natural unless you specifically agree otherwise, but since ♣'s here is opener's suit then 2♣ at (3) must be Stayman. Anyway, I assume that West thought that he was asking for majors, his partner did not; West's redouble demanded that East bid a major, his partner did not.

What happened? 2♦ by South just made for the N-S bottom. 2♦ redoubled by West went for 2200 and was obviously a clear bottom for E-W.

The bottom lines.

- 1- Agree with partner what you do when your NT is interfered with.
- 2- A 1NT overcall is 15-18. Expect problems if you overcall 1NT with a *totally* flat 15.
- 3- If partner has opened and you have a reasonably balanced 9+ points, then double an intervening 1NT overcall (for penalties). Any non-jump suit bid is weak (9-)

Weak or Forcing?

Board 19 from Friday 11th, E-W vul.

West	East
♠ K7	♠ A43
♥ AQ2	♥ 10653
♦ Q873	♦ -
♣ AQ43	♣ J98765

Table A:

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

Table B:

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

Table C:

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

Obviously the best contract for E-W is a ♣ part-score, preferably 3♣. But how do you get there? I was kibitzing at Table C and at the end I said that E-W had done well as luckily West had excellent ♣'s and nobody else found a ♣ partscore contract. I said that the only real solution is to play Lebensohl. North then had his tuppence (or 20 bht, 20 guilders, whatever) worth and said it was unnecessary and that I was complicating matters, just bid naturally. North said that East should bid 3♣, non-forcing. Fine, but what does East bid with a similar hand with, say, another ace? 3♣ forcing I suppose?

This is a problem and that's why two pairs 'got it wrong'. Obviously all three pairs considered that 3♣ was forcing. So is a new suit by responder here forcing or not? It's up to you, but you can't have it both ways. You can't have one bid to show a weak hand with a ♣ (or any other) suit as well as a strong hand with a ♣ (or any other) suit - it's even more important if your suit is a major. The answer is, of course, that you have to play Lebensohl. 2NT by East at (1) demands that West bid 3♣, which East either passes or corrects to his long suit. Thus any 3 level bid directly (so 3♣ here) is strong and forcing.

What happened? 4♣ made +1 (well played John), 3NT was -2 and 2♠ made +1.

The bottom line. Sometimes you cannot bid everything naturally (this is an excellent example). 3♣ cannot be both weak and strong. For situations like this it is necessary for more advanced players to have a few conventions in their arsenal.

Lebensohl is defined in the 2003 Yearbook.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: 2♥. A penalty pass (or penalty double if you do not play negative doubles) is a possibility; but I would prefer a slightly stronger hand at the one level and three cards in partner's suit is not good for defending (shortage is best). At the table, this player chose 1NT which I suppose is reasonable, but with a weak doubleton (and you know that the ♠ suit will not set up in NT) I prefer 2♥.
- Hand B: (a) A clear opener. Open 1♣ (or a weak 1NT).
(b) 2♦. Support with support, this is better than 1NT. If partner has a decent hand such that 3NT makes then he will bid again. If it's a partscore hand then it's best to play in the known fit.
- Hand C: Double. Penalties.
- Hand D: Pass. The Law, and this is a nice defensive hand. You need another ♠ to bid, your point count is irrelevant.
- Hand E: 2♣. If your 2NT opening range is 20-21 (and 2♣ followed 2NT is 22-24) then it's easy. If your 2NT opening range is 20-22 (and 2♣ followed 2NT is 23-24) then I would still open 2♣. Why? 4432 is reasonable shape, it is good when both the 4 cards are majors, but the main reason why it's worth more is the intermediates. Add on a big + for a hand with nothing less than a 7!
- Hand F: 2♦. You have game forcing values and must find a forcing bid. 2♥ is weak, 3♥ is only invitational and promises 4♥'s anyway. 4♥ is too unilateral and shows a weaker hand with (usually) 5 trumps. 2NT is 11-12 and non-forcing. 3NT is possible, it is 13-15, but with good 3 card ♥ support I prefer to bid 2♦ and see what happens; a subsequent 4♥ bid would then show game values and 3♥'s.
- Hand G: 3NT. Even if partner's 2NT range is 20-21 it's still worth a go. A combined 24 points is not usually enough for 3NT (especially if they are divided 20-4) but this hand is not 4 points. Add on a point for two 10's (♠ and ♦) – especially as they are in combinations with a higher honour (the Q's here), that's what Marty Bergen says – see news sheet 77. And add on another point for the ♣1098 combination.
- Hand H: This one depends upon your partnership agreement. Is a new suit at the 3 level here forcing in your system? If it is, then you cannot bid 3♣. If 3♣ shows a weak hand then it's fine. Which system is best? With Chuck I play a new suit here as forcing, but then we play Lebensohl – it's the only solution to the dilemma.
- Hand J: 1NT. A balanced hand in the 15-17 range.
- Hand K: 1NT. A balanced hand in the 15-17 range.

Monday 14/6/04

Friday 18/6/04

1st Hans/Dave 69%
 2nd Clive/Richard (Ire) 51%

1st Kenneth/John 64%
 2nd Ian/Terry 63%

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

Hand A

Hand B

With Hand A you are dealer. (a) Do you open?
 Would you open it if you were (b) 3rd seat, or (c) 4th seat?

♠ Q932
 ♥ A3
 ♦ A963
 ♣ J83

♠ 84
 ♥ KJ2
 ♦ K75
 ♣ AQ1092

With Hand B you open 1♣ and partner responds 1♦.
 What is your rebid?

Hand C

Hand D

With Hand C you open 1♣ and partner responds 1♠.

♠ KQ84
 ♥ QJ10
 ♦ 7
 ♣ KQJ108

♠ K7
 ♥ A64
 ♦ J108653
 ♣ A5

(a) What is your rebid?
 (b) Suppose that you choose 2♠, then what do you do if partner then bids 4♠?
 (c) Suppose that you choose 3♠, then what do you do if partner then bids 4♠?

What do you open with Hand D?

Hand E

Hand F

Do you open with hand E?

♠ K10973
 ♥ AK32
 ♦ 4
 ♣ 752

♠ A75
 ♥ AKQ74
 ♦ A94
 ♣ 76

(a) What do you open with Hand F?
 (b) Suppose that you choose 1♥, then what do you rebid after partner responds 1♠?

Hand G

Hand H

With Hand G partner opens 1♠.

♠ Q62
 ♥ J1094
 ♦ A1075
 ♣ J9

♠ J754
 ♥ Q10
 ♦ 6
 ♣ AQ10962

(a) what do you respond?
 (b) what do you respond if RHO overcalls 2♣?

With Hand H partner opens a weak 2♦. (a) What do you do?
 (b) What do you do if RHO overcalls 2♥?

Hand J

Hand K

Do you open in 1st seat with hand J?

♠ AJ965
 ♥ A10873
 ♦ J7
 ♣ J

♠ 102
 ♥ K97
 ♦ Q108754
 ♣ K7

(a) Do you open Hand K?
 (b) Suppose that you open 2♦ (weak). LHO overcalls 2♥ and partner bids 3♣. What do you do?

A Moysian Fit

Board 9 from Friday 11th, E-W vul.

North	South
♠ J1094	♠ -
♥ KJ102	♥ Q85
♦ J107	♦ KQ93
♣ 43	♣ AQJ1082

Table A:

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

Table B:

-	pass	pass	1♣
pass	1♥	1♠	3♣ (1)
3♠	pass	pass	pass (3)

Table C:

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

Table A: What would you bid at (1)? There are a number of fairly reasonable options: - 2♣, 3♣, 2♦, 2♥, 3♥ or a Support Double (showing 3♥'s). This South chose a 2♦ reverse; it does not quite have the values, but partner's ♥ bid and the opponent's ♠ bid have improved the hand immensely, so 2♦ is not too bad. Fine, but what to do at (2)? I would bid 3♥, even a 4-3 fit will play superbly when you can ruff with the short hand.

Table B: 3♣ at (1) was the choice of the other 2 tables. Reasonable I guess but I prefer the reverse (with the intention of bidding ♥'s later) or else direct ♥ support (either 2♥ or a Support double). The reason that I like the reverse followed by ♥'s is that this hand has the values for a 3♥ bid but a direct 3♥ would promise 4♥'s. Anyway, having not supported ♥'s and raised the bidding level, South has a problem now at (3) as the 4♥ may be too high.

Table C: South again chose 3♣, reasonable. But what about North's 3NT. Unreasonable! ♠J1094 is certainly a stop, but the opponents probably have 3 top tricks in the suit and East has 5♠'s. If you cannot run 9 tricks (unlikely) once you get the lead with a ♠ then you are down. I would pass 3♣.

And what happened? 3♠ made +1, 3♣ made exactly and 3NT went two down.

The bottom lines?

- With just 6 points and no fit, do not accept an invitational bid.
- When you have a void and 3 card support for partner, think of playing in a (major suit) Moysian fit.

After partner redoubles

Board 15 from Friday 18th, N-S vul

North	South (A)	West	North	East	South
♠ K10	♠ Q932	-	-	-	1♦ (1)
♥ Q1076	♥ A3	dbl	redbl (2)	pass	pass
♦ Q108	♦ A963	2♠	3♥ (3)	pass	pass (4)
♣ AQ96	♣ J83	pass			

The 4-2 fit did not play well, was anyone to blame?

- (1) First of all, the opening bid. Did you open Hand A in this week's quiz? It is borderline and two aces are a +, but it does not conform to the rule of 20 and I would pass.
- (2) This redouble shows 10+ points and usually no fit for partner.
- (3) So what is North's best bid here? Actually pass is best, assuming that partner knows that this is forcing – *after a redouble the opponents are not allowed to play in a contract that is not doubled*. Anyway, North was unsure if his partner would realise this. North has game values but anything could be right; 3NT, 5♦ or 4♥ if partner has 4♥'s. So South bid 3♥, forcing, hoping for a 4-4♥ fit.
- (4) Unfortunately North passed. What should he bid? These ♠'s are probably just good enough for 3NT; alternatively, you could bid 3♠ to ask partner for a stop.

What happened? 3♥ went one down for a bottom. At other tables N-S scored +200 for 3♠ going 4 down (undoubled!) and 1NT by South made +2.

The bottom lines: -

- Even if you open with a sub-minimum hand, do not pass a forcing bid.
- After a redouble, any pass is forcing. Overcaller's side should not be allowed to play in any contract that is not doubled.
- A new suit at the 3 level by an unlimited hand is forcing.

Don't open a weak two with 12 points and a rubbish suit.

West	East (D)	Board 22 from Monday 14 th , E-W vul			
West	North	East	South		
♠ 52	♠ K7	-	-	2♦ (1) pass	
♥ KJ7	♥ A64	pass	pass		
♦ AKQ2	♦ J108653				
♣ J9	♣ A5				

An easy 3NT missed, was anyone to blame?

East was quick to blame West's pass, I disagree. What did you open with Hand D in this week's quiz? 1♦ I hope. The culprit was clearly East, this is a terrible pre-empt because: -

- The suit really is too weak,
- It has two outside aces,
- It has 12 points!

The bottom line? Don't open a weak two with 12 points and a rubbish suit.

A con-trick?

Board 20 from Friday 18th, both vul

Dealer: ♠ 102
North ♥ K97
Love all ♦ Q108754
♣ K7

West	North (K)	East	South (H)
pass	2♦ (1)	2♥	3♣ (2)
pass	3NT (3)	all pass	

♠ A986	N	♠ KQ5
♥ A86	W E	♥ J5432
♦ 32	S	♦ AKJ9
♣ 8543		♣ J
	♠ J754	
	♥ Q10	
	♦ 6	
	♣ AQ10962	

3NT would appear to be too high with this combined 17 count, was anyone to blame?

- (1) 2♦ was weak. Looks OK to me.
- (2) Now this was the problem. What sort of hand should a new suit after partner's pre-empt show?
Standard is that it is a good hand and forcing.
- (3) North certainly assumed this, and with his max and the key ♣K he bid 3NT.

And what happened? With the ♦ AKJ9 sitting over the North hand E-W can take the first 9 tricks; but it did not work out that way! :-

♠ 2		East led the ♦ A and switched to the ♣ J won by North's ♣ K. North led a ♥ to dummy's ♥ 10 and West won with the ♥ A and returned the ♥ 8.	
♥ K		Declarer could now run out for just minus two, but since things had gone remarkably well he decided on a con-trick.	
♦ Q10875		North now led ♠ 4 from dummy, West played low and East won North's ♠ 10 with ♠ Q.	
♣ 7		What should East do in this position?	
♠ A98	N	♠ K5	He assumed that North had the ♠ A and so cashed ♦ K (♠ discard from dummy) and then led a ♥. Declarer claimed the remainder for the contract.
♥ 6	W E	♥ J54	
♦ 3	S	♦ KJ9	
♣ 854		♣ -	
	♠ J75		
	♥ -		
DUMMY →	♦ -		
	♣ AQ1096		

Clearly E-W's tally of 4 tricks was 5 tricks less than they were entitled to, what went wrong? Perhaps West's ♥ 8 return at trick 4? But then East had bid the suit. So should East have led ♠ K instead of the ♦ K or a ♥ when he was in later? It's not that obvious, one would assume that any sane declarer had the ♠ A. But East really should be suspicious here, North's 2♦ opening promises 6-9 points. He has shown up with the ♣ K and presumably has the ♦ Q. West's ♥ A at trick 3 denied the ♥ K so North has it and that's a total of 8 – he cannot have the ♠ A? But would declarer really be leading ♠'s without it? It's not obvious, maybe North doesn't have the ♦ Q? – and people have been known to open 2♦ with 12 points and a rubbish suit!!

And at other tables? 4♥ was bid and made +1 by East at another table.

The bottom lines: -

- Remember RONF (Raise Only Non-Forcing). The only non-forcing bid after partner has opened with a pre-empt is a raise of his suit.
- A new suit at the 3 level by an unlimited hand is forcing.

A Competitive Deal?

Board 14 from Monday 14th

Dealer: ♠ KJ64
 North ♥ A5
 Love all ♦ 32
 ♣ J10852

♠ A97 N ♠ 108
 ♥ Q872 W E ♥ J1064
 ♦ 97 S ♦ KQ864
 ♣ A943 ♣ KQ
 ♠ Q532
 ♥ K93
 ♦ AJ105
 ♣ 76

Table A

West	North	East	South
-	-	pass	pass
pass	pass		

Table B

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	pass
1♥	pass	2♥	pass
pass	pass		

Table C

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

At least it was slightly competitive at Table C.

Table A: So do you open this East hand? I would. It conforms to the rule of 20. The ♣KQ are bad but the ♦KQ are excellent. The deciding factor is the two 10's (the ♥J10xx is worth more than 1 point).

Table B: All fairly sensible, except that I would have made a noise with the North hand.

Table C: Now this North made the right noise at (1), promising both black suits. East has a minimal opener, but you should always support partner, 2♥ at (2) is correct; it generally shows 4 card support and does not promise extra values. And, of course, having passed at (2) East should bid 2♥ at (3).

And what happened? 2♥ was bid twice, either making or making +1. 1♠ made +2.

The bottom lines: -

- You do not need an opening hand to compete at a low level, just good shape.
- Support partner with 4 cards, even if your opening was light.

A Negative Double

Board 17 from Monday 14th

Dealer: ♠ AJ85
North ♥ 87
Love all ♦ J8632
♣ K4

Table A

West (G)	North	East (E)	South
-	pass	1♠ (1)	2♣
pass (2)	pass	pass	

♠ Q62	N	♠ K10973
♥ J1094	W E	♥ AK32
♦ A1075	S	♦ 4
♣ J9		♣ 752
	♠ 4	
	♥ Q63	
	♦ KQ9	
	♣ AQ10863	

Table B

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

Table C

West	North	East	South
-	pass	pass (1)	1♣
pass	1♦	dbl (5)	2♣
pass (6)	pass	pass	

E-W have an easy ♥ partscore, so why did the bidding subside at 2♣ at three tables on Monday?

Table A: West's pass is the problem at this table. What can West bid at (2) after South has pushed the bidding up to the two level? You need 11 points to respond with a new suit at the two level. If not playing negative doubles then 2♠ is very clear.

Table B: I was this West, I can't remember who my bidding partner was but (s)he obviously played negative doubles. Double at (2) only promises 4 ♥'s and values to compete, so 6+ points. And 3♥ at (3)? It's one above the Law; but West knows that it's a double fit (♠Qxx opposite a 5 card suit).

Table C: This East chose to pass initially. Did you open this week's Hand E? The hand does not quite conform to the rule of 20, but you can add on a bit for the ♠109. This, and the fact that the other 4 card suit is ♥'s and is excellent would make me open, especially as I have a very easy rebid. If you do not open you will probably not be able to show both 5 ♠'s and 4 ♥'s later. The double at (5) promised ♥'s and ♠'s, but only 4-4. West should bid 2♥ at (6), perhaps he was afraid to opposite a passed partner?

And what happened? 2♣ was the contract at 3 tables and it made +1. 4♣ went -1. Nobody played in ♥'s but it looks like 9 tricks to me.

The bottom lines: -

- K10973 is worth more than 3 points.
- AKxx is worth more than 7 points.
- Play negative doubles.
- Support partner's major suit opening if you hold Qxx.

Play in a 4-3 fit?Board 10 from Friday 18th, both vul

North	South (B)	West	North	East	South
♠ Q653	♠ 84	-	-	pass	1♣
♥ 73	♥ KJ2	pass	1♦ (1)	pass	2♦ (2)
♦ A942	♦ K75	all pass			
♣ KJ3	♣ AQ1092				

A silly contract, where did it go wrong?

(1) Should North respond 1♦ or 1♠ with this North hand? Standard is to bid 'up the line' and most players bid 1♦ with this hand type.

(2) This is where it went wrong, South's rebid is 1NT (12-14).

And what happened? 2♦ was -1, 1NT made +2 or +3 at other tables.

A decent 4-3 fit is occasionally better when a major suit but not with a minor. This is because there may often be an extra trick, in which case a major suit contract scores more than NT. I.e. 1NT scores 90 but 2♠ scores 110; and if both make overtricks then the ♠ contract still scores more. The same is not true with minor suits; 1NT and 2♣ score the same if making exactly, but NT is better if there are overtricks.

The bottom line. Don't go out of your way to play in Moysian fits, especially in a minor.

Nine cards in the majors opposite 1NTBoard 3 from Monday 14th, E-W vul

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ A9	♠ J1084	-	-	-	pass
♥ J42	♥ Q10975	pass	1NT	pass	2♣
♦ AKQ9	♦ -	pass	2♦	pass	4♥
♣ K954	♣ AJ102	all pass			

This table got to the very sensible 4♥ contract. After North opens 1NT this South hand is easily worth game. Quite how two pairs subsided in 2♥ baffles me. Even with the hand being a bit of a mis-fit there is a ♥ fit and 4♥ was easy.

And about the bidding. I've been through this before, once South realises that he has a game forcing hand he simply chooses which way to go. I prefer the Stayman route but 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 2♠ (2nd suit, game forcing) etc. is an equally good way.

And what happened? 4♥ made and two pairs made +2 in 2♥. One pair somehow found 3NT.

The bottom lines: -

- 10's are worth a bit, especially in conjunction with other honours.
- 3 such 10's are a big +
- 5440 type shape is very powerful, especially with both majors.
- 25 points is usually enough for game.

An easy slam?

Board 5 from Monday 14th, N-S vul

North (C)	South
♠ KQ84	♠ AJ952
♥ QJ10	♥ A97
♦ 7	♦ AJ2
♣ KQJ108	♣ 93

Table A:

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	pass	1♠
pass	3♠ (1)	pass	4♠ (3)
all pass			

Table B:

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

Table C:

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	pass	1♠
pass	2♠ (1)	pass	4♠ (2)
pass	4NT (3)	pass	5♠
pass	6♠	all pass	

Slam was bid at only one table on Monday, let's look at the bidding. I don't really like the bidding at any of them: -

Table A: The first two bids are obvious. What did you bid with Hand C at (1) in this week's quiz? 3♠ is game invitational and usually around 16-17 points. This North hand is worth it. But South's 4♠ is too feeble. He would accept the game invitation with an ace less. South should press on and I would cuebid 5♦ (a no ace response to Blackwood does not help).

Table B: This West chose just 2♠ at (1). A bit of an underbid perhaps. However, after partner jump to game West should come to life.

Table C: This West again chose the conservative 2♠ at (1) but mad up for it later.

After the Monday session somebody did ask me about the wisdom of bidding Blackwood when you yourself have no ace – he had read somewhere that you need an ace yourself to bid Blackwood. Fiddlesticks. If partner has shown a strong hand then 3 aces may well be enough for slam. Now with this particular North hand it could just be that the ♥AK are both missing. Perhaps, but then the opponents have to find that lead.

And what happened? Slam was bid at only one of the 4 tables. 12 tricks were easy. Notice that the location of the ♥K is irrelevant when South is declarer.

The bottom lines.

- A 5 card suit like ♣KQJ108 is a big +
- A useful singleton (especially in a suit that partner has denied, so the ♦ here) is a big +
- KQxx in partner's suit is a big +
- If you have a 5 card suit with 3 aces and partner shows a good hand (3♠ at (2)) the go for it, make a slam try.
- You do not necessarily need an ace yourself to bid Blackwood.

Dig up a minor

Board 11 from Monday 14th, love all

North South (F)

♠ J9432

♠ A75

♥ 103

♥ AKQ74

♦ K109

♦ A94

♣ KJ3

♣ 76

Table A:

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

Table B:

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

Table C:

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1NT (1)
pass	2♥	pass	2♠
pass	2NT	pass	3NT (5)
all pass			

So 3 different contracts, and at the 4th table N-S somehow stopped in 3♠. Which is best? Debatable; maybe 3NT, maybe 4♠. I suspect that most experienced bidding pairs will reach 4♠ and I give my recommended auction below. But first, let's look at these auctions: -

Table A: The first two bids are pretty obvious, but what about 3♥ at (2)? This is not forcing and with an enormous 17+ points (it's worth 18 or 19) you want to be in game. I would manufacture a game forcing 3♣ bid and await developments. And West's pass at (4)? This hand has enough for game and 3NT looks best to me.

Table B: This South chose a different bid at (2). Again, this suffers from the drawback that it is not forcing. It also implies 4 card support. As I said, 3♣ (or 3♦) is best.

Table C: What did you open with hand F in this week's quiz? 1♥ I hope. This South chose an off-beat 1NT opener, this hand is *far* too good. And 3NT at (5)? With the weak doubleton and good 3 cards support, 4♠ looks right to me.

Give West ♠KJ943 ♥103 ♦K109 ♣J53 and 3NT is silly.

And how should the bidding go? How about 1♥ - 1♠ - 3♣(or 3♦) - 3♠ - 4♠.

The bottom lines: -

- If your hand is worth far more than 17 points, then don't open 1NT.
- If you open 1NT and partner transfers then it's usually best to support his suit later with 3 cards and a weak doubleton.
- If you have game forcing values then don't make an invitational bid - so don't bid 2NT, 3♥ or 3♠ at (2).
- Very occasionally you may have to invent a 3 level bid **in a minor** in order to achieve this last point.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: (a) Pass. A decent 11 points with reasonable shape but it's not good enough - and it does not conform to the rule of 20. Pass in 1st or 2nd seat.
(b) 1♦. You can open light in 3rd seat if you wish and 1♦ would be acceptable.
(c) 1♦. In 4th seat if you open with a weak hand then a competitive auction is likely to follow. The ♠ suit is all important and the rule of 15 applies (points + ♠ length). This is a sound opener in 4th seat (11 + 4 = 15).
- Hand B: 1NT. 2♣ is a poor alternative.
- Hand C: (a) 3♠, game invitational. This bid shows about 16-17 points but this hand with its great shape and good intermediates is worth it. 2♠ is acceptable but a bit feeble. The hand is not worth game here, with a little more than a 4♦ splinter would be in order.
(b) If you chose just 2♠ then this should work out well after partner has jumped. Look for slam now, so 4NT Blackwood.
(c) If you chose 3♠ as your rebid then you have said your hand, so pass.
- Hand D: 1♦.
- Hand E: 1♠. The hand does not quite conform to the rule of 20; but the suits are excellent, they are majors and they are in the right order for easy bidding. A singleton plus the fact that all the points are in the long suits would induce me to open this one.
- Hand F: (a) 1♥. Some players will open 1NT with this type of hand, I don't like it with such a good suit. But the main problem with a 1NT opening is that this hand is far too strong. With a 5 card suit headed by the AKQ and also two outside aces this hand is worth 18-19 points.
(b) 3♣ or 3♦! Partner's 1♠ response has improved this already very strong hand and your next bid needs to be game forcing. So 2NT, 3♥ and 3♠ are all out (non-forcing). 3NT is a possibility but is not flexible (and I don't like NT with these weak ♣'s). If partner has 5 ♠'s then you want to be in the 5-3 ♠ fit and if partner has 3 ♥'s then you want to be in the 5-3 ♥ fit. How do you find out?
'Dig up a minor'! A 3♣ or 3♦ bid here is game forcing and is, in principle, a 2nd suit. However, in practice, it asks partner to support your major with 3 card support or to rebid his major if 5 cards.
- Hand G: (a) 2♠. It's not good enough to bid a new suit at the two level and so you have to bid 2♠. This is a good hand for playing 2/1. Then you would bid 1NT (forcing) and then 2♠ unless partner bids 2♥ (and then you've found the better ♥ fit).
(b) If you do not play negative doubles, then bid 2♠. If you play negative doubles then the overcall has helped you! You can now double, promising 4 ♥'s. If partner does not have 4 card ♥ support then you will bid 2♠. Easy.
- Hand H: (a) pass, (b) pass. 3♣ shows a strong hand and is forcing.
- Hand J: 1♠. This is a hand from last week and a member queried the 1♠ opening. He pointed out that the two minor suit jacks may be worthless. I agree, but I would still open even if these two jacks were replaced with small cards. Why? With 9 points it's just one short of the rule of 20, but two 5 card suits both headed by the ace (especially majors) are a very big +. Also, there is the very important point mentioned with Hand E and that is the rebid. You open 1♠ and have a very easy rebid (2♥).
- Hand K: (a) 2♦. Perhaps not everybody's choice but quite reasonable.
(b) 3NT. Partner's 3♣ bid is strong & forcing. With the ♣K and a ♥ stop bid 3NT

Is it forcing? – part 1

Board 15 from Monday 21st, N-S vul.

North (A)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ 107	♠ K84	-	-	-	1♦ (1)
♥ A1054	♥ QJ	pass	1♥ (2)	pass	2NT (3)
♦ KQJ65	♦ A843	pass	3♦ (4)	pass	pass (5)
♣ 65	♣ AKJ10	pass			

An easy game missed, who's fault?

- (1) I always open hands 4-4 in the minors (outside my opening NT range) with 1♣, but some choose 1♦, OK.
- (2) 1♥ is correct, even with excellent ♦ support, never deny a 4 card major.
- (3) 2NT is fine, showing a balanced 18-19 points.
- (4) So what should North bid at (4)? Obviously 3♦ if, and only if, it is forcing. Is it?
Yes. The only weak bids after partner's strength showing 2NT are pass and a return to responder's 1st suit (so 3♥ here) although many players (including me) prefer to also play this as forcing (so the only weak bid is pass!).
- (5) Clearly South should bid 3NT at (5).

And what happened? At other tables 3NT made exactly as did 6NT.

Is it forcing? – part 2

Board 24 from Monday 21st, love all

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ 102	♠ AKQ4	pass	pass	1♦ (1)	pass
♥ 9432	♥ Q8	1♥ (2)	pass	2NT (3)	pass
♦ Q10432	♦ AJ65	3♦ (4)	pass	3NT (5)	pass
♣ K7	♣ QJ5	pass	pass		

Now this time this West thought that 3♦ was weak but East thought otherwise, lets have a look: -

- (1) The 1♦ opening at is fine, the hand is not good enough for 2NT.
- (2) 1♥ is correct, even with excellent ♦ support, never deny a 4 card major.
- (3) Now should East bid 2NT, 1♠ or jump to 2♠ here? That depends upon your partnership style and I prefer 2NT as long as you have a mechanism (some sort of Checkback) to locate a possible 4-4 ♠ fit later. So 2NT at is fine, showing a balanced 18-19 points.
- (4) So what should West bid at (4)? Obviously 3♦ if, and only if, it is not forcing. Is it?
We answered that above, it is forcing. West would like to play in 3♦ but you cannot unless you play the Wolf signoff convention – I am not going into that now. So West has to choose between passing or a rather optimistic 3♦ or 3NT.
- (5) South correctly assumes 3♦ was forcing and elected for 3NT.

And what happened? Obviously 3NT makes if the opposition don't take their ♥ tricks in time. 3NT made but 1NT was only +1 at another table (I guess somebody opened an over-weight 1NT?).

The bottom line. Check sequences C & D in this week's quiz.

Is it forcing? – part 3

Board 11 from Friday 25th

Dealer: ♠ 862
South ♥ KQJ1064
Love all ♦ Q10
♣ 63

♠ J7 N ♠ A4
♥ A982 W E ♥ 7
♦ 85 S ♦ AK972
♣ AKJ54 ♣ Q10872
♠ KQ10953
♥ 53
♦ J643
♣ 9

Table A

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

Table B

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	2♠ (1)
dbl	pass (5)	3♦ (6)	pass
pass (7)	3♠ (8)	pass (9)	pass
pass			

A new suit at the 3 level is generally forcing, but both tables got this disastrously wrong on Friday. In fact there were a number of poor bids and an easy slam missed at both tables: -

Table A: (1) I would open with a weak 2♠.

(2) A weak jump overcall, fine.

(3) East has values for game and must find a forcing bid, any ♣ bid is non forcing. You could bid 3♥ to ask for a ♥ stop, but with this excellent ♣ support and good shape there may be slam and I think that 3♦ is OK, but it may be simpler to just bid (RKC) Blackwood..

(4) Unfortunately West did not take this 3♦ bid as forcing.

Table B: (1) This South chose the sensible 2♠ opening.

(5) After West's double North chose to pass. With 3 card support I would bid 3♠.

(6) Now this is terrible. Normally a 3 level bid is forcing, but here partner's take-out double has forced a 3 level bid. A non-jump like this shows 0-9 points and East must make a positive move. A jump to 4♦ is possible but unfortunately is not absolutely forcing. Probably best is to cuebid 3♥ and then any subsequent bid below game is game forcing.

(7) West's pass is correct as East has shown no values.

(8) I have no idea what North was thinking here. Partner has opened with a weak bid (6-9 pts) and he has 8 points, it is quite likely that the opponents have game (even slam?). A pass here ends the auction – excellent.

(9) East now has a 2nd chance. 4♣ or 5♣ (or 6♣ or 7♣!) would have worked out very well.

And what happened? 3♦ was +1 and 3♠ was -2. 6♣ is absolutely cold as is 7♣ with careful play.

The bottom lines: -

- A new suit at the 3 level by an unlimited hand is forcing...
- .. except if it is a minimum bid after partner has forced you to bid with a take-out double.
- One good method to establish a game force is to cuebid the opponent's suit.
- If your partner has opened a weak two, then raise pre-emptively immediately with 3 card support.
- If you have a weak hand and partner has pre-empted then don't bid in the pass-out seat -you will feel sick if the opponents then go on to bid 5♣, 6♣ or even 7♣!

When 1NT gets doubled

Board 2 from Friday 25th

Dealer: ♠ 10986
East ♥ K82
N-S vul ♦ 2
♣ A10743

♠ 754 N ♠ AJ3
♥ 10653 W E ♥ A97
♦ Q643 S ♦ K1098
♣ 52 ♣ KJ8
♠ KQ2
♥ QJ4
♦ AJ75
♣ Q96

Table A

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

Table B

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

Obviously I need to explain a few things about when a 1NT opening gets doubled: -

Table A: (1) When your RHO opens 1NT then a double shows 15+ points and is for penalties. Some players restrict the upper range to about 18 points as with more you know that partner will pull it. This hand is borderline, you all know me – subtract a point for 4333 type shape; I would pass but I suspect that most players would prefer to double. Another good reason for not doubling is that there is no good lead against 1NT doubled.

(2) West knows he's in for a hiding and this West simply chose to pass.

(3) With a good 7 points opposite partner's 15+ I would pass here.

Table B: (2) This West decided to run, quite reasonable.

(3) North could pass here, but he does not really want to defend 2♦, either doubled or not, so with 8 points 3♣ is very sensible.

(4) Unfortunately this East did not realise that his partner was very weak.

(5) Partner's 3♣ bid has shown values and so a penalty double here is clear.

What happened? 2♣ made exactly but 3♦* went minus two.

The bottom lines: -

- A double of an opening 1NT is 15-18 points and is for penalties.
- The only strong bid that responder can make after partner's 1NT opening is doubled is redouble.
- When your partner has doubled 1NT it's usually best to pass and go for the penalty with 5+ points.
- When you open 1NT you have said it all; do not bid again unless partner invites.

Obey the LAW

Board 5 from Friday 25th

Dealer: ♠ K5
North ♥ KQJ32
N-S vul ♦ Q842
♣ 62

♠ 84 N ♠ AQJ976
♥ 1094 W E ♥ 5
♦ AK7 S ♦ 1095
♣ Q10854 ♣ A73
♠ 1032
♥ A876
♦ J63
♣ KJ9

Table A

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

Table B

West	North	East	South
-	1♥ (1)	1♠	2♥ (6)
pass	pass	2♠	3♥ (7)
pass	pass	pass	

Let's see which table got this one right: -

- Table A: (1) 11 points, but I would open 1♥ - it's a nice ♥ suit, there's an easy (2♦) rebid and it conforms to the rule of 20.
(2) A nice 9 count with excellent intermediates, but it's not quite worth a 2 level response so 1NT is fine.
(3) Now this another reason why I would have opened. A 2♥ overcall here could be disastrous – East is unlimited and you may catch a penalty double.
(4) Luckily for North East did not have a ♥ stack and quite reasonably bid 2♠.
(5) But South got this one wrong. With 4 card support the 3 level is 'safe' and he should bid 3♥.
- Table B: (1) Open 1♥, I agree.
(6) Values for 2♥, so bid it.
(7) Here is where the LAW is applied. South has shown his 6-9 points and he now correctly bid 3♥ - not because he is maximum, but because he has 4 ♥'s!

And what happened? 2♠ made 10 tricks. 3♥ went just minus 1 for a good score.

The bottom lines: -

- With a marginal opening hand, remember the rule of 20. And sway towards opening if you have an easy rebid.
- Obey the LAW. In competitive situations compete to the total number of trumps. So 4 cards opposite an overcall (or major suit opening) is 9 in total – compete to the 3 level.

Worth a go at slam?

Board 19 from Friday 25th, E-W vul.

West East (B)

♠ K8 ♠ 432
♥ AKQJ ♥ 10754
♦ Q987 ♦ AK542
♣ AJ2 ♣ K

Table A

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

Table B

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

Table A: West's opening is 20-21, so should East try for slam or not?

The answer is that it depends. 30-31 points is only good enough for slam if there is a fit or a long suit. This ♦ suit is very respectable but not enough on it's own, a ♥ fit is also needed. East should bid 3♣ (Stayman) even if slam was not in the air – a 4-4 fit will play better, especially with a singleton.

Table B: This East got it right. The East hand has 10 HCP's, the ♦ suit is a +, the shape is a +, but the ♣K is a bit of a minus. I say 'bit of' because it's not that bad as partner has opened 2NT and probably has either the ♣A or ♣Q. Anyway, it all adds up to the fact that this is a respectable 10 count and worth slam if, and probably only if, there is a 4-4 ♥ fit.

And what happened? 6♥ made and 3NT was +3. Note the power of the good 4-4 fit. The ♥'s were split 4-1 but 6♥ is still a far better contract than 6♦ or 6NT. This is because with the 4-4 fit you can choose which hand to take ruffs in, in a ♦ contract you gain nothing by ruffing with the long ♦ hand and so there are only 11 tricks in 6♦ or 6NT if the ♠A is offside.

The bottom lines: -

- Always look for the 4-4 fit.
- 30 or 31 points is usually only enough for slam if there is a fit.

Bidding Quiz Answers

Hand A: 3♦. 3NT is reasonable but I prefer 3♦ (it is forcing) as there may be a ♦ slam.

Hand B: 3♣, Stayman. Look for the 4-4 ♥ fit.

Sequence C: 3♦ is forcing. If you have a weak hand and prefer ♦'s to ♥'s, then pass 2NT.

Sequence D: Up to you (and your partner).

3♥ is played as a weak bid by many players. If you have a good hand and 5 ♥'s then bid a forcing 3♣ or 3♦. Equally well, many other players say that any bid over 2NT is forcing. I prefer this latter approach but it's up to you.

Another option is the Wolf signoff (3♣ is a weak puppet to 3♦).

Monday 28/6/04

Friday 2/7/04

1st Hans/Dave 64%
 2nd Clive/Terry 62%

1st Dave/Terry 71%
 2nd Clive/Martin (Hol) 54%

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

Hand A Hand B

♠ Q10943 ♠ KQJ
 ♥ 62 ♥ Q32
 ♦ K7653 ♦ J9864
 ♣ 9 ♣ 76

With Hand A partner opens 1♠, What do you bid?

With Hand B partner opens 1♣, you bid 1♦, partner bids 1♥
 and you bid 1NT. Partner then bids 2♣, what do you do?
 So 1♣ - 1♦ - 1♥ - 1NT - 2♣ - ?

Hand C Hand D

♠ AQJ10987 ♠ 1043
 ♥ Q63 ♥ K876
 ♦ 93 ♦ 3
 ♣ K ♣ AKQJ5

With Hand C you open 1♠ and LHO overcalls 2♣. Partner bids 2♠, what do you do?

With Hand D you open 1♣ and partner bids 1♦. You rebid 1♥
 and partner bids 1NT. What now?
 So 1♣ - 1♦ - 1♥ - 1NT - ?

Play Quiz

Dummy(S)	You (North)	West	North	East	South
♠ AJ42	♠ K10987	-	-	-	1♦
♥ 9	♥ 108632	pass	1♠	dbl	2♠
♦ AK10932	♦ 8	pass	3♥	pass	4♠
♣ J6	♣ A2	all pass			

You are declarer in 4♠. East leads the ♦J which you win with the ♦A in dummy.

- Which card do you play next?
- When (if) you lead trumps, how do you play them?
- What is your general strategy?

The play's the thing

Board 19 from Monday 28th

Dealer: ♠ K10987
 South ♥ 108632
 E-W vul ♦ 8
 ♣ A2

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

♠ Q3 N ♠ 65
 ♥ K75 W E ♥ AQJ4
 ♦ Q7654 S ♦ J
 ♣ 1083 ♣ KQ9754

♠ AJ42
 ♥ 9
 DUMMY→ ♦ AK10932
 ♣ J6

South might consider 3♠ at (1), but this time it's about the play.

So you are North and get the ♦J lead; you win with the ♦A in dummy, what card do you lead next and what is your general game plan?

You should draw 2 rounds of trumps. A cross ruff is not a good idea as East's bidding (and lead) indicate that he is short in ♦'s. At trick two you should lead a ♠ to the ♠K and a ♠ back to the ♠A. If the ♠Q does not fall then leave it out and play the ♦A throwing the ♣2 from hand. Note that with this particular ♠ layout it is usually best to lead the ♠A from dummy so that you are then able to pick up the ♠Q in the West hand if it is guarded 3 times. However, you cannot afford to do that here as you would then be short of entries to establish the ♦ suit and you cannot afford to draw 4 rounds of trumps anyway.

As it happens the ♠'s split and everything is fine. Having cashed the ♦K you are still in dummy. East's lead must be a singleton or a doubleton, so lead the ♦10. West should duck this and you throw a ♥ from hand – this is a ruffing finesse. The ♦9 follows which West covers and you ruff. You now concede a ♥ and a ♣ is returned. You win in hand (North) and we have: -

♠ 109
 ♥ 1086
 ♦ -
 ♣ -

You have just won the ♣A in the North hand. The plan is simple and 100%. Ruff a ♥ in dummy and lead a ♦. Ruff it and you can get to dummy's master 3♦ with a ♥ ruff. 12 tricks.

♠ - N ♠ -
 ♥ K7 W E ♥ AQ4
 ♦ 7 S ♦ -
 ♣ 108 ♣ Q9

♠ J4
 ♥
 DUMMY→ ♦ 32
 ♣ J

And what happened? Everybody was in 4♠ and two North's made 12 tricks. Well done. Yvonne/Dinie and Martin/Rosemary. But I'm afraid to say that perhaps the club's two leading pairs failed dismally. One made just 11 tricks and the other actually went down (he attempted a cross-ruff line).

The bottom lines: -

- It's usually best to draw trumps, especially if you have 9 of them.
- If an opponent initially leads a jack and you can see the ten, then it's probably a singleton or doubleton.
- With 9 trumps missing the queen, lay down the ace and king, and it's often best to leave the queen out if it does not drop.
- Remember the ruffing finesse, and sometimes you have to be careful about entries.
- If dummy has a 6 card suit, think about setting it up.

Way too high Board 18 from Friday 2nd, N-S vul.

West	East (C)	West	North	East	South
♠ K43	♠ AQJ10987	-	-	1♠	2♣
♥ 10985	♥ Q63	2♠	pass	4♠ (1)	all pass
♦ K107	♦ 93				
♣ J63	♣ K				

4♠ was bid twice on Friday (and it was 5♠ at the 3rd table!). The ♦A was with South and so it was only two off. Just unlucky or poor bidding?

West's 2♠ bid is beyond reproach, so did East push the boat out too far? What did you bid with Hand C in this week's quiz? It's a super 7 card ♠ suit – but look at the rest of the hand! East can see 7 potential losers and partner's 6-9 points will probably only cover two, maybe three of them. East should pass at (1) and only press on if pushed by South.

And what happened? West covered just two of East's losers and so it made just 8 tricks. 5♠ was doubled and cost 500.

The bottom lines: -

- A singleton king in the opponent's suit may well be worthless.
- Count your losers.

Raise partner's major to 4 with 5 card support. Board 3 from Monday 28th

Dealer:	♠ Q10943	West	North (A)	East	South
South	♥ 62				
E-W vul	♦ K7653	-	-	-	1♠
	♣ 9	dbl	4♠	all pass	
♠ K	N	♠ J7			
♥ KJ98	W E	♥ 107543			
♦ J102	S	♦ A98			
♣ AKJ102		♣ Q54			
	♠ A8652				
	♥ AQ				
	♦ Q4				
	♣ 8763				

N-S have only 17 combined points but 4♠ is unstoppable, even with the ♥K offside. A 5-5 fit is enormous, that's why you should always raise partner to the limit of the LAW.

And what happened? 4♠ made exactly at one table, it made +1 at another and also made +1 at yet another table when it was doubled. Quite why either East or West would want to double 4♠ is a mystery to me. Perhaps they are points pundits and believe that a singleton king is worth 3 points, or that AKJ102 is going to get oodles of tricks in defence?

The bottom lines: -

- A singleton king in the opponent's suit may well be worthless.
- When partner opens 1♥/♠, raise to 4♥/♠ with 5 card support and 4 to about 10 points (with more, make a constructive noise).

What's best, a 5-2 or 4-3 fit?

Board 16 from Friday 2nd, E-W vul.

West (B) East (D)

♠ KQJ ♠ 1043
♥ Q32 ♥ K876
♦ J9864 ♦ 3
♣ 76 ♣ AKQJ5

Table A

West	North	East	South
pass	pass	1♣	pass
1♦	pass	1♥	pass
1NT	pass	pass (1)	pass

Table B

West	North	East	South
pass	pass	1♣	pass
1♦	pass	1♥	pass
1NT	pass	2♣ (1)	pass
2♥ (2)	all pass		

Table A: Here East decided not to pull 1NT into 2♣ at (1).

Table B: And this East decided that the fact that he had 9 cards and all his points in two suits warranted a 2♣ bid.

Who's right? We need to look into it a little deeper: - Often when you are 5-4 with the 4 carder suit lower ranking it is best not to play in NT. But I think that East at Table A got it right this time. West has bid your singleton and his NT bid should show a ♠ stop. Also, the likely ♠ lead will go up to partner and the ♣AKQJ5 are 5 tricks in NT. But it's not that obvious and Table B's 2♣ at (1) is not that bad. So what should West do at (2)? East is known to have 4 ♥'s and 5 or 6 ♣'s, if West retreats into the 4-3 ♥ fit then ♦ ruffs will need to be taken in the long trump hand and the contract falls apart, the 5-2 ♣ fit is to be preferred, so pass.

And what happened? The 2♥ contract fell apart and went minus 2. 1NT made exactly or + 1 at other tables.

The bottom lines: -

- A suit like AKQJx plays very nicely in NT.
- A 5-2 fit is usually better than a 4-3 fit.

Bidding Quiz Answers

Hand A: 4♠.

Hand B: Pass. Partner does not like NT. He has 4♥'s and 5 or 6 ♣'s. Even if he has only 5 ♣'s the 5-2 fit usually plays better than a 4-3 fit.

Hand C: Pass. Too many losers.

Hand D: Pass. You are worried about ♦'s but partner has bid that suit. You will probably get a ♠ lead, but partner should have a ♠ stop and it's best for the lead to go up to his hand. Your ♣ holding provides 5 quick tricks in NT, lovely.

Play Quiz Answers

- You should draw two rounds of trumps. You plan to set up the ♦ suit, so you need entries to dummy. Thus lead a low ♠ to the ♠K.
- You then lead a ♠ to the ♠A.
- You are now in dummy. You should play a ruffing ♦ finesse and set up the ♦'s. This gives you 11 tricks and 12 tricks if the ♠'s split (they did).

Monday 5/7/04

Friday 9/7/04

1st Kenneth/John 61%
 2nd Hans/Dave 58%

1st Clive/Martin (Hol) 63%
 2nd Yvonne/Dinie 50%

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

Hand A Hand B With Hand A you open 1♦ and partner bids 1♥, what is your rebid?

♠ QJ10 ♠ A8
 ♥ K642 ♥ 73
 ♦ AKJ842 ♦ AQJ109873
 ♣ - ♣ J

What do you open with Hand B?

Hand C Hand D With Hand C partner opens 1♦ and you bid 1♠. Partner then rebids 1NT (12-14), what do you bid?

♠ AK9863 ♠ KQ10943
 ♥ AQ8 ♥ 3
 ♦ 92 ♦ AK105
 ♣ 84 ♣ K2

With Hand D you open 1♠ and partner bids 1NT. What do you bid? 2♦, 3♦, 2♠, 3♠ or 4♠?

Sequence F

	W	N	E	S
Is 3♠ invitational or forcing?	-	pass	pass	1♠
	pass	1NT	pass	3♠?

Sequence G

	W	N	E	S
Is 3♠ invitational or forcing?	-	1♦	pass	1♠
	pass	1NT	pass	3♠?

Play Quiz

Dummy(S)	You (North)	West	North	East	South
♠ QJ10	♠ AK93	-	-	-	1♦
♥ K642	♥ A1087	pass	1♥	pass	3♥
♦ AKJ842	♦ 3	pass	6♥	pass	pass
♣ -	♣ AK98	pass			

You are declarer in 6♥. East leads a ♣ which you choose to ruff in dummy. You now tackle ♥'s.

- Which ♥ do you lead from dummy?
- Does it matter in which hand you win the first ♥?
- Suppose that you cash the ♥K and both follow (♥3 from West, ♥5 from East). You then lead the ♥2 from dummy and West plays ♥9, which ♥ do you play from hand (North)?

Which is the best slam? 6♥ or 6NT?

Board 7 from Monday 5th

Dealer:	♠ AK93	West	North	East	South (A)
South	♥ A1087				
Both vul	♦ 3	-	-	-	1♦
	♣ AK98	pass	1♥	pass	3♥ (1)
		pass	6♥	all pass	
♠ 75	N	♠ 8642			
♥ QJ93	W E	♥ 5			
♦ Q965	S	♦ 107			
♣ J73		♣ Q106542			
	♠ QJ10				
	♥ K642				
DUMMY→	♦ AKJ842				
	♣ -				

Three out of the 4 tables on Monday reached 6♥ and this was the bidding at one of them. South's 3♥ is OK, although some may prefer a 4♣ splinter or a direct 4♥ at (1). The 4th table somehow reached 6NT, Maybe South rebid 3♦ at (1)? Anyway, I would always prefer some sort of ♥ support bid, especially with a void.

So then, which is the best contract, 6♥ or 6NT?

6♥ makes if trumps are 3-2 and it does not need the ♦Q outside. 4♥'s with West are also manageable, so 6♥ fails only if trumps are 5-0 or 0-5 or 1-4 with East.

So	♥'s 3-2	68%		
	♥'s 4-1 but not with West	14%	Total	82%

The chances of 6NT making are different. Only 2♥ tricks are required but the♦ suit must come in for at most one loser. So 6NT makes if ♦'s are 3-3 or if the ♦Q is outside Qxxx or less.

So	♦'s 3-3	36%		
	♦Q outside, (Q, Qx or Qxxx)	20%	Total	56%

The odds are rough but near enough. So 6♥ is clearly the better slam. But is it? At teams scoring, definitely; but things are different at pairs. Let's assume that everybody else is in the 6♥ slam. Then you score 50%, a joint top, for 6♥ making. But if you bid 6NT then your average score is better. You get 100% of the match points if both slams make or if 6NT makes and 6♥ goes down. These odds are 56% + 10% = 66%. So you get a top 66% of the time and you get an average 10% of the time (when both contracts fail). Thus 6NT, a far 'inferior' contract is better at pairs scoring! That's just the way it is at pairs scoring, an inferior contract may be mathematically best. And 56% may be better than 82%!

The play's the thing. Now I said that QJxx with West is no problem in 6♥. But how did you play this week's play quiz? You should cash the ♥K and then play towards hand, inserting the ♥10 if West plays low. This is a safety play and ensures just one ♥ loser.

And what happened? I lied. I have altered the E-W hands slightly. The ♥ safety play was not needed as West held ♥Qx and East ♥Jxx. But this was the actual ♦ position and so 6♦ went down. Tough luck Martin/Clive, serves you right for ignoring the 4-4 fit?

What's Your Rebid? – part 1

Board 1 from Monday 5th, love all.

North South (D)

♠ 5	♠ KQ10943
♥ KJ942	♥ 3
♦ Q86	♦ AK105
♣ 9643	♣ K2

Table A:

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

Table B:

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

Table C:

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

Table A: So what did you bid at (1) with Hand D in this week's quiz? Basically, is the hand worth a force to game or not? This South considered the hand worth just an invite.

Table B: This South chose the simple approach - 4♠. This was my choice, the hand does not have game forcing high card strength, but the 10's and 9 in the long suits, a good 6 card major and lack of useless quacks was enough for me.

Table C: This South chose to bid his 2nd suit. Unfortunately 2♦ is a weakish bid (max about 15 points) and North obviously passed. I would always rebid a good 6 card major in preference to a 4 card minor.

And what happened? 4♠ made and 3♠ was +1.

The bottom lines: -

- Sequences where you jump rebid in your suit are mostly non-forcing. In this particular case 1♠ - 1NT - 3♠ is invitational but non-forcing.
- Rebid a 6 card major in preference to a 4 card minor.
- You need about 16-17 points for a jump rebid, but 6 card suits and intermediates in long suits are a big +.

What's Your Rebid? – part 2

Board 8 from Monday 5th, love all.

North South (C)

♠ J5	♠ AK9863
♥ 976	♥ AQ8
♦ AQ1086	♦ 92
♣ AK7	♣ 84

Table A:

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

Table B:

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

Table A: So what did you bid at (1) with Hand C in this week's quiz? The hand is worth a game force and this South thought that 3♠ was forcing – it is not. As to whether North should pass or not, that's another story. It's a decent 14 count but with only Jx in partner's suit, it's debatable. I would bid 4♠ but that's not the issue here.

Table B: This South chose the simple approach - 4♠. That is what I would bid. A forcing 3♣ or 3♥ are possibilities, but with a good 6 card suit and a partner who almost certainly has 3 or 2 card support, I would simply bid game.

And what happened? 3♠ made +1 at two tables but Table B got it wrong and went one down.

The bottom lines: -

- Sequences where you jump rebid in your suit are mostly non-forcing. In this particular case 1♦ - 1♠ - 1NT - 3♠ is invitational but non-forcing.
- Rebid a 6 card major in preference to messing about. If it's worth game, then bid game.

A 2♣ opener?

Board 23 from Friday 5th, both vul.

North	South (B)
♠ K6	♠ A8
♥ KQ105	♥ 73
♦ 5	♦ AQJ109873
♣ A8653	♣ J

Table A:

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
pass	1♥	pass	3♦
pass	3NT	all pass	

Table B:

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	2♣
pass	2♥	pass	3♦
etc to 6NT			

6NT is a poor contract. It requires ♦K doubleton or singleton outside. Let's look at the bidding at these two tables.

Table A: Quite sensible.

Table B: This South chose to open with his strongest bid - 2♣. It has 8½ playing tricks and he told me afterwards that he remembered me writing that you should open 2♣ if you would feel sick if partner passed a 1 level opening. I did say that, but if partner passes then I would not feel sick with this South hand. It will not make game – it is not good enough if partner cannot respond to a 1♦ opening.

Hand E Remember this Hand E from news-sheets 60 and 61? I opened it with 2♣. It is 9½ playing tricks + ♣K and ♥J. Now this obviously is a 2♣ opener, but Hans said that it was not! Indeed, Chuck even agreed with Hans although I suspect that he was not being serious? Anyway, if one (or two) of our leading players believe that Hand E is not worth 2♣, then Hand B certainly is not!

And what happened? A ♣ was not led and the ♦K was doubleton outside so the poor slam rolled home. 5♦ was bid at the 3rd table. The Bottom lines: -

- A 2♣ opener is 23+ points or one trick short of game.
- 2♣ openers are defined in news-sheet 61, it's in the 2003 Yearbook.
- If your hand does contain oodles of tricks but not many points, then consider a high level pre-empt.
- But I consider this particular South hand too good for a 5♦ opening and I prefer to be ace-less for such a bid.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: 3♥. You know me, I would always support partner in a major suit 4-4 fit. I would not argue if you consider the hand worth game and bid 4♥ (or a 4♣ splinter). 3♦ is also a possibility, it is encouraging but not forcing, but I prefer to support partner.
- Hand B: 1♥. Not good enough for 2♣. If you play strong twos then it's good enough for a strong 2♦. I think it's a bit too good for a 5♦ pre-empt. I guess that one (absent) member would open a silly 4♦?
- Hand C: 4♠. 3♠ is not forcing and I cannot see much point in messing about with forcing bids of 3♣ or 3♥. Partner must have at least two ♠'s for his 1NT rebid.
- Hand D: 4♠ or 3♦. The hand is far too strong for 2♦ or 2♠. 3♠ is not forcing and I think it's worth a shot at game. 3♦ is forcing and is an equally good alternative to 4♠. With a good 6 card suit I would simply bid the 4♠ game although this time partner's 1NT bid does not promise any ♠'s. As it turned out partner had a miserable 6 count with a singleton ♠ but 4♠ still made.
- Sequence F: Invitational
- Sequence G: Invitational. An experienced Acol player maintained that 3♠ in this sequence is forcing (the 1NT rebid shows 15-16 in Acol). Even in Acol this sequence is not forcing but highly invitational - refer to Crowhurst p160.

Play Quiz Answers

- (a) The ♥K.
- (b) Yes. You must lead the 2nd ♥ from dummy ...
- (c) ... because if West plays low (the ♥9) to the 2nd ♥ then you can insert the ♥10 to ensure just one loser in the suit regardless of where the remaining ♥Q and ♥J are.

Monday 12/7/04

Friday 16/7/04

1st Chuck/Terry 70%
 2nd Hans/Dave 67%

1st Kevin/Noreen 61%
 2nd Dave/Terry 59%

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

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A partner opens 1♣. You respond 1♥ and partner then bids 1NT (12-14), what do you do?
♠ K76	♠ Q9873	
♥ AK42	♥ A6432	With Hand B RHO opens 1♦, what do you do?
♦ AJ42	♦ 75	
♣ K9	♣ 6	
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C partner opens 1♣ and RHO overcalls 1♠. What do you bid?
♠ 73	♠ KQJ5	
♥ A963	♥ A9	With Hand D RHO opens 1♦, what do you do?
♦ KJ5	♦ KJ72	
♣ AKJ7	♣ J53	
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E you open 1♣. Partner responds 1♥ and so you obviously rebid 1NT. Partner then bids 4NT, what do you do?
♠ AQ9	♠ Q76	
♥ Q6	♥ 953	With Hand F partner opens 1♣. (a) what do you bid?
♦ 763	♦ AKJ6532	(b) Suppose that you bid 1♦. Partner rebids 1NT, what now?
♣ A8653	♣ -	
Hand G	Hand H	With Hand G partner opens 1♦, what do you do?
♠ 1063	♠ J10974	With Hand H you choose to open with 1♠. Partner bids 2♦ and you bid 2♥. Partner then bids 3NT, what do you do?
♥ 653	♥ AQ532	So 1♠ - 2♦ - 2♥ - 3NT - ?
♦ Q6	♦ K	
♣ K10984	♣ 64	
Hand J	Hand K	(a) What do you open with Hand J?
♠ 85	♠ AK4	(b) Suppose that you choose 1♦, then what is your rebid after partner bids 1♠?
♥ K6	♥ AQ4	
♦ KQ1098	♦ J75	With Hand K LHO opens 1NT and RHO bids 2♥ (transfer).
♣ AQ98	♣ J732	You pass, LHO bids 2♠ and RHO bids 4♠. What do you do?
Hand L	Hand M	With Hand L partner opens 1NT, what do you bid?
♠ 9	♠ A10532	With Hand M you open 1♠. Partner bids 2♣ and you rebid 2♥.
♥ 103	♥ QJ765	Partner then bids 3♠, what should you do?
♦ A9872	♦ A54	
♣ AJ874	♣ -	

How many points for slam?

Board 11 from Monday 12th, love all.

North (A) South (E)

♠ K76 ♠ AQ9
♥ AK42 ♥ Q6
♦ AJ42 ♦ 763
♣ K9 ♣ A8653

Table A:

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣ (1)
pass	1♥ (2)	pass	1NT (3)
pass	4♣ (4)	pass	4♠
pass	6NT	all pass	

Table B:

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

To slam or not to slam? That is the question. Let's look at the bidding at these two tables: -

Table A: (1) A minimal but sound opener, it conforms to the rule of 20.
(2) It's probably a matter of style if you respond 1♦ or 1♥.
(3) 12-14, obvious.
(4) Crunch time. A very respectable 18 count. Reasonable shape and all those aces and kings make this quite a nice hand. So off to slam? This West thought so and 4♣ is Gerber, the ace ask, after partner's last bid was NT.

Table B: The same start but this time North did not insist upon slam at (4). As I said, this is a decent 18 count but opposite a flat 12-14 you need about 21 points to insist upon a NT slam. This 4NT bid is quantitative and asks partner to bid the slam with a maximum. South is minimum and so passed at (5).

And what happened? The hand was played 4 times and the hopeless 6NT was reached at two tables, down one. 4NT made exactly and a fourth table managed to find 6♥, down two.

The bottom lines: -

- 4♣ is the ace ask after partners last bid was NT, 4NT is a natural raise.
- 4NT is the ace ask when a suit has been agreed.
- With two balanced hands you need a combined 33 points to make 6NT.
- So you need 21+ points to insist upon slam opposite 12-14.
- With a good 19-20 you can invite (with 4NT) opposite 12-14.

This actual North hand is at the lower limit for an invitational 4NT raise and 3NT would also be very reasonable; forcing to slam is a gross overbid. Good show Chuck (he was the North who chose 4NT) and thus scored a clear top despite the fact that his partner made one trick less than everybody else.

If you look back at previous news-sheets (and two pages further on in this sheet) you will see slam making with less points, but that is only when you have a **fit** or a good long suit.

I'll just use up this space to say what you need to look for a 6NT when partner opens a strong NT (so 15-17) and you have a flat hand with no 4 card major: -

10-15 bid 3NT
16-17 bid 4NT – quantitative
18+ Gerber.

An unusual Unusual NT?

Board 15 from Monday 12th.

Dealer:	♠ 5	West	North	East	South (A)
South	♥ QJ987				
N-S vul	♦ 98542	-	-	-	1♠ (1)
	♣ Q3	2NT (2)	pass (3)	3♣	3♥ (4)
		5♣	5♥	pass	pass
♠ A	N	6♣	dbl	all pass	
♥ 6	W E				
♦ AQ103	S				
♣ AKJ7642					
	♠ K10974				
	♥ AK1032				
	♦ J7				
	♣ 5				

An unusual auction, let's analyse it: -

- (1) 1♠ is correct when 5-5 in the majors.
- (2) The Unusual NT (UNT). It is generally a weak hand promising at least 5-5 in the minors.
- (3) North enquired about the bid and was informed by East that it was weak with both minors.
- (4) South asked if the UNT could be strong, and East again replied that it was weak. It would be nice to have a little more, but West's pre-empt (ho-ho) has raised the level.

What can I say? Let's start with a quote from news-sheet 70.

UNT (and Michaels cue bids) are probably the most abused conventions out there; they should promise 5-5 (or maybe 6-5) in the specified suits; not 5-4, not 6-4 etc. They are generally weak bids, but if you bid again then many experienced players play that they were actually strong.

Something new for the club. I will be giving a prize to the first player who actually makes an UNT (or Michaels) bid with the correct hand type. An enormous 7-4 most certainly does not qualify.

So what should I say about West's bid? I guess that you can play UNT as either weak or very strong (this treatment is more common with Michaels) – but the opponents are entitled to know! Anyway, 7-4 is not a suitable shape. Perhaps people need to re-read the extract from News-sheet 70. Do not play UNT (or Michaels) if you are simply going to abuse the convention.

Anyway, E-W (a fairly regular partnership of two experienced players) need to discuss this. If they wish to play that the bids may be very strong then they must alert and inform the opposition. Any repeat without such an alert will be treated as a partnership understanding and will receive a warning and an adjusted score. East was not impressed when I stated this at the table, but then we have different views on almost everything – I suggest that he re-read the rules. This is, of course, very similar to the saga of news-sheet 78 (the atrocious 4♦ overcall) – and three of the players are the same!

If you happen to play with a partner with a different bidding style from your own and the opposition ask about your partner's bid, do not reply with what the bid would mean if you made it, but what it means when partner has made it!

The prize has gone!

Board 1 from Monday 12th.

Dealer: ♠ KJ62
North ♥ J109
Love all ♦ 64
♣ 10432

♠ A1054 N
♥ 7 W E
♦ J1093 S
♣ AJ75

♠ Q9873
♥ A6432
♦ 75
♣ 6

♠ -
♥ KQ85
♦ AKQ82
♣ KQ98

Table A

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

A possible auction

West	North	East	South
-	pass	1♦	pass
1♠	pass	3♣ (4)	pass
3♦ (5)	pass	3♠ (6)	pass
4♣ (6)	pass	4♦ (7)	pass
4♠ (8)	pass	6♦	all pass

The easy slam (6♣ or 6♦) was missed at every table on Monday. I only know the auction at Table A: -

- (1) 2♦ is a Michaels Cue Bid. Weak (about 6-11 pts) and usually 5-5 in the majors. This is obviously a classic hand for the bid and so the prize offered on the previous page has gone.
- (2) West did not bother to ask about the bid (South promises ♠'s) but simply bid his ♠ suit. Anyway, the damage had been done and it's difficult for E-W to reach the slam now after the pre-emptive interference. If West had not bid 2♠ then North would have bid 3♠ or 4♠ at (3) to make life difficult.

Nobody bid the slam, so I give a possible auction if there was no interference: -

3♣ at (4) is game forcing and so West can simply bid 3♦ at (5) to set trumps. 3♠ at (6) is a cue bid as is 4♣. East bids 4♦ at (7) because he would like to hear a 4♥ cue bid (in which case 7♣/♦ is there). West's 4♠ cue bid at (8) denies the ♥A and so East settles for 6♦.

And note what I said earlier about the points for slam. Here it's 29 but slam is a doddle because there is a **fit**. Swap the ♠A with the ♥7 and 7♣/♦ is cold. Yet nobody even made a try for slam! Funny game bridge. Three pairs bid slam on that flat garbage earlier and yet nobody even made an effort with these superb hands.

And what happened? 3NT was bid at 3 tables (making +1 or +2) and it was 5♦ +1 at the 4th table.

The bottom lines: -

- If you need just one card for slam (♣A or ♥A here) then make an effort!
- If you have the *correct shape* and **point count**, consider the UNT and Michaels conventions.
- The Michaels cue bid is weak (6-11) with at least 5-4 (but usually 5-5) in the majors.

Asking for a stop

Board 14 from Monday 12th.

Dealer: ♠ 73
East ♥ A963
Love all ♦ KJ5
♣ AKJ7

♠ AQJ86 N ♠ 10954
♥ J75 W E ♥ 1082
♦ Q432 S ♦ 1086
♣ 8 ♣ 943

♠ K2
♥ KQ4
♦ A97
♣ Q10652

Table A

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

Table B

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

3NT by South is the best spot: -

- Table A: (1) This is a negative double. If West had passed, North would have bid 1♥, promising 6+ points and 4+ ♠'s. A negative double of 1♠ says *exactly* the same. You cannot bid 2♥ as that promises 5 ♥'s.
(2) South is non-min and 2NT is an option, However, I would prefer to have a little more as partner may have only 6 points.
(3) This is game forcing and asking for a ♠ stop.

Table B: This pair presumably do not play negative doubles? So North has bundles of points and bid 2♥. OK?

No. A 2♥ bid is forcing but is wrong on two counts: -

1- it promises a 5 card suit and partner will support with just 3 (as in this case). 2- South may have a ♠ tenace vulnerable to the opening lead (as in this case).

And what happened? 3NT made 12 or 13 tricks the 3 times it was bid. 4♥ is a poor contract but somehow they managed 12 tricks, presumably East did not lead the obvious ♠? But even with this mis-defence 4♥ +2 scored a clear bottom.

The bottom lines: -

- If partner opens 1♠ and you bid 2♥ then that promises 5+ ♥'s
- Read up on negative doubles.

Who should bid NT?

Board 13 from Monday 12th.

Dealer: ♠ 1063
North ♥ 653
Both vul ♦ Q6
♣ K10984

♠ KQJ5 N ♠ 974
♥ A9 W E ♥ Q842
♦ KJ72 S ♦ 54
♣ J53 ♣ A762
♠ A82
♥ KJ107
♦ A10983
♣ Q

Table A

West (D)	North (G)	East	South
-	pass	pass	1♦
pass (1)	1NT (2)	all pass	

Table B

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

Table C

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

Table A: So what did you bid at (1) with Hand D in this week's quiz? Pass is not the answer (see Table C). And what did you bid at (2) with Hand G in this week's quiz?

5 points is normally insufficient to respond, but this hand is worth more. 1098 in a 5 card suit is worth a point. So this North correctly bid 1NT.

Table B: Now it is permissible to overcall with a *good* 4 card suit at the *one* level. This is only when you have a good holding in the opener's suit (so you cannot double), but it does not apply if a 1NT overcall is an option. And what about South's 2♥ bid at (3)? It shows a strong hand with 4♥'s and 5♦'s but I don't like it for two reasons: -

1- It is not strong enough.

2- If you play negative doubles then partner has denied 5+ pts with 4♥'s.

Table C: This West got it right and overcalled 1NT (15-18).

And what happened? 2♥ went two down for a bottom. 1NT by West made exactly the two times it was played. At Table A the defence went astray (setting up declarer's ♣'s for him) and North made 10 tricks. So this North made 4 more tricks than the other two N-S's – sometimes it is a big advantage to be declarer, especially if the defence do not take their signalling seriously.

The bottom lines: -

- If 1NT describes your hand then bid it.
- A 1NT overcall is 15-18 with a good stop(s) in the suit opened.
- It is perfectly acceptable to by-pass a 4 card major to overcall 1NT. This is not denying a 4 card major and partner can still use Stayman as if you had opened 1NT.
- A suit like K10984 is worth far more than 3 points.
- Use your signalling method when defending – it can make the difference between a contract going down or making 3 overtricks!

What do you need to double game?

Board 23 from Friday 16th.

Dealer: ♠ QJ10732
South ♥ 75
Both vul ♦ A4
♣ K105

♠ 96 N ♠ AK4
♥ J109832 W E ♥ AQ4
♦ 632 S ♦ J75
♣ 64 ♣ J732

♠ 85
♥ K6
♦ KQ1098
♣ AQ98

Table A

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

Table B

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦ (1)
pass	1♠	pass	1NT (5)
pass	2♠	all pass	

An unusual auction at Table A, let's analyse it: -

Table A:

- (1) So what did you open with Hand J at (1) in this week's quiz? I was South and chose 1NT - see my answers to the bidding quiz if you don't like this.
- (2) A transfer followed by a jump to 4 of the major promises game values and a 6 card suit. See how easy it is to reach the correct contract if South opens 1NT.
- (3) But East did not think it was the correct contract! What did you bid with Hand K? See what I think of this double in the bidding quiz answers.
- (4) So should South pull it (to 4NT) or not? A close call. I expected East to have something like ♠ AQ1096 in ♠'s for his double (that's what he should have) and with these nice minors I elected to bid 4NT.

Table B: Here South started with 1♦, the choice of many I suspect. And 1NT (or 2♣) are OK at (5) if you think that the South hand is 14 points.

And what happened? 4NT doubled at Table A made +1 for a score in the thousands. And at other tables? Nobody else was in 4♠ - I guess nobody else opened 1NT? 2♠ made +2 at Table B and West went for 500 in 4♥ doubled at the third table.

The bottom lines: -

- Do not double a freely bid game unless you have a surprise for the opponents. AKx of trumps and another ace is not a surprise. Something like AQ1096 sitting over the guy with the suit is.
- And even with such a surprise it may be best not to double if they can run into NT.
- Transfer followed by 4 of the major shows a 6 card suit. This North hand is a classic example.
- Intermediates in long suits are a big +. Upgrade such a hand.
- With 2245 or 2254 shape and 15-17 points (after evaluation!), think about a 1NT opening.
- Some experts say that you should open 1NT with 2245 but 1♦ with 2254 as you have an easy 2♣ rebid. I'm not so sure, the 2♣ rebid could be way less than 15-17 points.

And a final word for the points pundits (who think that the South hand is 14 points).

3NT or 4♠ make easily on a mis-fitting '24' points. And why did they stop in 2♠ at Table B? - because the South hand is too good.

If 3NT is an option, bid it! Part 1Board 12 from Friday 16th, N-S vul

West	East (F)	West	North	East	South .
♠ KJ85	♠ Q76	1♣	pass	1♦ (1)	pass
♥ A862	♥ 953	1NT	pass	2♦ (2)	pass
♦ 98	♦ AKJ6532	pass	pass		
♣ KQ2	♣ -				

3NT is the best spot, what went wrong?

- (1) I was asked the correct bid here. Most players play that 2♦ is a strong bid here and it's perhaps a matter of style if you bid 2♦ with this hand. I would prefer to have more points for a jump shift and I too would bid 1♦.
- (2) But what now? 2♦ is a weak bid and this hand is far too good. 3♦ (invitational) is a possibility (it's a bit too good). But you know me, I hate to end up in 3♦ or 5♦ if 3NT may make. I would bid 3NT.

And what happened? 2♦ made +2. 3NT was bid and made +1 at another table.

The bottom line. With a long (semi)solid minor, think about 3NT – I think I've said that before?

If 3NT is an option, bid it! Part 2Board 17 from Friday 16th, love all

North (L)	South	West	North	East	South .
♠ 9	♠ AQ72	-	pass	pass	1NT
♥ 103	♥ AQ64	pass	3NT	pass	pass
♦ A9872	♦ Q6	pass			
♣ AJ874	♣ K52				

When dummy appeared East asked me if I thought that 3NT was a good bid. Do you? What did you bid with hand L in this week's quiz?. East considered the singleton and doubleton in a NT contract to be bad and thought that perhaps the hand was only worth an invitational bid?

Actually the reverse is true. Look on the positive side and forget those negative waves. This North hand has two very good 5 card suits, and aces are good cards. The hand is well worth 3NT and simply bidding 3NT is better than messing about in the minors.

And what happened? 3NT made +3 and made +1 at another table. At the 3rd table they went two down in 6♣, presumably North bid his ♣ suit?

The bottom lines: -

- Think positive
- Long minor suit(s) usually play well in NT
- 5 card suit(s) headed by the ace are a good++

And finally, for both of these hands - If 3NT is a sensible option, bid it.

A jump to 3NT means that you want to play there!

North (H)	South	Board 13 from Friday 16 th , both vul.			
♠ J10974	♠ A	West	North	East	South
♥ AQ532	♥ 109	-	1♠ (1)	pass	2♦
♦ K	♦ AJ10753	pass	2♥ (2)	pass	3NT
♣ 64	♣ K1073	pass	4♥ (3)	all pass	

3NT is the best spot, what went wrong?

- (1) Would you open this hand? It's borderline; the J109 in a 5 card suit are a +, but a singleton king is a -. Anyway, I'm not arguing.
- (3) But I am arguing here. What did you bid at (3) with hand H in this week's quiz? The 2♥ bid at (2) promises 4 or 5 ♥'s and partner's jump to 3NT says that he is not interested in either of opener's suits. The 3NT bid is often based on a decent long minor and the ♦K is a great card. Also, if partner was remotely interested in ♥'s (say 3 card support) then he would bid 3♣ (4th suit forcing) at his 2nd turn. North should pass at (3).

And what happened? 4♥ went minus two. 3NT was bid and made at another table and 2♠ (by East!) was minus two at the third.

The bottom line. When partner *jumps* to 3NT he is not interested in your suits and it's usually best not to bid on without a very good reason.

Shortage in partner's suit is bad

North (M)	South	Board 9 from Friday 16 th , E-W vul			
♠ A10532	♠ KJ8	West	North	East	South
♥ QJ765	♥ 9	-	1♠	pass	2♣ (1)
♦ A54	♦ KQ87	pass	2♥	pass	3♠ (2)
♣ -	♣ 108752	pass	4♠ (3)	pass	

4♠ went two down, so who overbid?

- (1) This is close, 2♠ would be reasonable but this South reasoned that his trumps are good and with a singleton it's worth 3♠. The way to show that the 3♠ raise is just 3 cards is to bid another suit and bid 3♠ next go. That's what this South planned to do. I'm not arguing.
- (2) And that's what he did. Correct? I'm not so sure now. He had a borderline 3♠ raise at (1) but now that partner has bid his short suit it's not now worth 3♠, 2♠ is better.
- (3) And what about this acceptance with 4♠? What did you bid with Hand M in this week's quiz? Normally a good hand with a void, but a void in partner's suit is not a + factor! A void in partner's suit is usually of little use and so this hand has just 11 points and should pass 3♠.

So both players overbid. What's more, since everybody was in 4♠ going down it looks like half the players in the club overbid!

The bottom line? Shortage in partner's suit is not an asset.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: 3NT or 4NT. The hand is borderline for an invitational 4NT bid. What's more, it is nowhere near good enough to launch into slam (4♣ is the ace ask here), which is what 3 people did on Monday.
- Hand B: 2♦, a Michaels Cue Bid. If you do not play Michaels Cue Bids then I guess that you could overcall (1♠?). But you cannot then later introduce your ♥ suit as that would show a much stronger hand.
- Hand C: Double. A negative double. If you bid 2♥ then that shows a 5 card suit. The other problem with 2♥ is that an initial ♠ lead will go through partner. If you do not play negative doubles then it's difficult and you would have to bid 2♦.
- Hand D: 1NT. 15-18 with a ♦ stop(s).
- Hand E: Pass. Partner's 4NT is quantitative, looking for slam if you are maximum. This hand is minimum and so passes. If partner wanted to know about your aces he would have bid 4♣, Gerber.
- Hand F: (a) 1♦. I prefer this to 2♦ (I would like more high cards for 2♦).
(b) 3NT. 2♦ and 3♦ are not forcing and I want to be in game. As I have frequently said, 3NT is usually better than 5♦ when you have a long suit.
- Hand G: 1NT. 6-10 points and no 4 card major. This hand is worth 6 points because the K1098x is a good +. Also the ♦Qx in partners suit is good and the ♠10 may be worth something.
- Hand H: Pass. Partner's jump to 3NT says that he is not interested in your suits.
- Hand J: (a) 1NT. This hand is not 14 points, if you think that it is, then have another look. The 5 card suit (KQ1098) is huge - 1098 in a 5 card suit is most certainly worth a point or two. And the other 4 card suit is worth more than its face value with the 98. The hand is worth 16 points and it is often good to protect a tenace (♥Kx and ♣AQ here) by opening 1NT. But the over-riding reason for opening 1NT is
(b) ...I don't know what to rebid after opening 1♦! If you open 1♦ then what is your rebid over 1♥/♠? 2♣ is perhaps a bit feeble and a game forcing 3♣ is certainly too much. A 1NT rebid is 12-14 (this hand is too good) and 2NT is 18-19. That is why it's usually best to open 1NT when your hand is within your NT range and (semi) balanced.
- Hand K: Pass. Double is terrible. You have 3 sure tricks, but that's all; the ♥K is probably sitting over your ♥Q. The opponents have freely bid to game and your partner is surely bust.
- Hand L: 3NT. Now I'm sure that somebody out there will tell you that there is a convention where 3♣ shows a hand 5-5 in the minors and weak; and 3♦ shows a hand 5-5 in the minors and strong. I am a fan of good conventions but this one is not good in my view. Anyway, is this hand weak or strong? I'm a simple soul, I don't want to play in 3 of a minor, I don't want to play in 5 of a minor, I want to play in 3NT; so that's what I would bid. And that's what Dave, my partner, did bid at the table.
- Hand M: Pass. If partner had bid anything but ♣'s then this hand is worth a shot at game; but shortage in partner's suit is bad and so this hand should pass.

Monday 19/7/04

Friday 23/7/2004

1st Chuck/Terry 60%
 2nd Kevin/Noreen 59%

1st Dave 44 IMPs
 2nd Sheila 37 IMPs

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

Hand A Hand B

♠ KQ32 ♠ K107
 ♥ K98432 ♥ 9863
 ♦ 10 ♦ QJ54
 ♣ 54 ♣ 107

With Hand A partner opens 3♣, non vul, and RHO bids 3NT.
 What do you do?

With Hand B partner opens 1NT, what do you do?

Hand C Hand D

♠ 97 ♠ AJ85
 ♥ J ♥ K1075
 ♦ K962 ♦ A2
 ♣ QJ10987 ♣ A53

At love all, what do you open with Hand C as dealer?

With Hand D RHO opens 1♣, what do you bid?

Bid Stayman?Board 19 from Friday 23rd, E-W vul

North	South (B)	West	North	East	South .
♠ AJ85	♠ K107	-	-	-	pass
♥ K1075	♥ 9863	1♣	1NT	pass	2♣ (1)
♦ A2	♦ QJ54	pass	2♥	pass	2♠ (2)
♣ A53	♣ 107	all pass			

So do you bid Stayman at (1)? Pass is probably best because if partner bids 1♠ you will be in a 4-3 fit; but as LHO bid ♣'s that may work out OK and so Stayman is not too bad. As it happened, South lucked out when partner replied 2♥. Exactly why South then bid 2♠ at (2) will remain one of those mysteries that will never be solved by mankind.

And what happened? 2♠ went two down for minus 200. 1NT was made at the other table.

The bottom line. Do not bid Stayman unless you can cope with any (2♦/♥/♠) response.

Incidentally, what does the sequence 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2♠ mean? ...

... it is up to partnership understanding. Playing 4-way transfers it shows an invitational hand with 4♠'s. Others play it as a hand with 5♠'s but not quite good enough to transfer and then invite. I like to play 4-way transfers and so for me it's the former.

A sound pre-empt?

Board 24 from Monday 19th.

Dealer:	♠ AJ6	West (A)	North	East	South
West	♥ AQ65	(me)			
Love all	♦ QJ54				
	♣ AK	3♣ (1)	3NT (2)	4♣	pass
		pass	dbl	all pass	
♠ 97	N	♠ KQ32			
♥ J	W E	♥ K98432			
♦ K962	S	♦ 10			
♣ QJ10987		♣ 54			
	♠ 10865				
	♥ 107				
	♦ A873				
	♣ 632				

An interesting auction, let's analyse it: -

- (1) So do you open with this hand? If this ♣ suit were any other suit then many would open a weak two and some experienced players (see comments by Marty Bergen below) would open with a weak 3 bid. Since you cannot open a weak 2♣ I think that 3♣ is obvious.
- (2) North is a bit fixed now. Normally he would open 2NT to show a balanced 20-21 points and Stayman/transfers should find the correct contract. After the pre-empt he has to guess and 3NT is best, tough if you miss a ♥ 4-4 fit. That's what pre-empting is all about.
- (3) West's pre-empt has deprived N-S of bidding space and they may or may not be in the right contract. East has a reasonable defensive hand and, thanks to partner's bid, an easy lead. This 4♣ bid is ludicrous, it is most certainly a candidate for the worst bid of the year.

And what happened. 4♣ doubled was -3 for a bottom. And at other tables 3NT was bid twice and made exactly. At a fourth table North played in 1NT (+1), I've no idea how.

Anyway, let's get back to our table. At the end of play East criticised my opening. I believe that it is a perfect pre-empt (see below). I did not bother to comment upon East's ludicrous 4♣ bid. As I said above, a pre-empt makes life difficult for the opponents, but there is also another advantage. Lead indication - if East simply passes and leads a ♣ then North's contract is hopeless. North smugly said that he was happy with +500. I'm sure he was, but I see little point in making the remark unless he was implying that it was my fault for opening such a pre-empt? Now I am used to Hans continually trying (and failing) to find fault with my bidding. He read a Marty Bergen book a few months back and claimed that he bids just like Marty Bergen. Really? Lets have a Marty Bergen hand:

♠ 76	This comes from 'Marty Sez ... vol 2, page 88. What sez Marty?
♥ 4	<i>As dealer with neither side vulnerable open 3♦. No majors, no defence</i>
♦ QJ10982	<i>and 'solid' trumps. Opening 2♦ is better than nothing but is being too</i>
♣ Q953	<i>nice to the enemy. As for pass, for once, I'm speechless.</i>

So there you have it. Even if there was such a thing as a weak 2♣ opening, this Hand A should open 3♣ (for the reasons Marty sez). The bottom lines: -

- If you have made a foolish bid and it results in a bad score, don't try to blame partner.
- And if you do wish to criticise my bidding at the table then you really should know what you are talking about. Expect me to write it up.

That unusual Unusual NT again

Board 27 from Monday 19th.

Dealer:	♠ Q10875	West	North	East	South
South	♥ J105				
N-S vul	♦ J10	-	-	-	1♥
	♣ J109	2NT (1)	pass (2)	3NT (3)	pass
		5♣ (4)	pass	pass (5)	pass
♠ K4	N	♠ A9632			
♥ -	W E	♥ K832			
♦ AKQ64	S	♦ 972			
♣ KQ8652		♣ 7			
	♠ J				
	♥ AQ9764				
	♦ 853				
	♣ A43				

Problems, yet again, when the UNT convention is abused: -

- (1) In traditional methods a jump overall of 2NT is 19-20 points, i.e. a hand that is relatively balanced and too good for a 1NT overcall. A more recent meaning for the bid is weak with at least 5-5 in the minors. This 3rd meaning (5-5 but weak or possibly very strong) is a variation that I have only seen in this club.
- (2) The same North who asked last week. This North hand is too weak to make a bid at the 3 level and I cannot see the point in asking the meaning of the bid during the auction. If you have no intention of bidding whatever the answer is, it's best to leave your question until the end of the auction. Anyway, North unwisely asked and East said that it was 19-20 points.
- (3) Opposite 19-20 points East wants to be in game and so bid 3NT (surely a 3♥ transfer is best?).
- (4) And now we come to the real problem. West plays the UNT and his 2NT bid only promised about 6-10 points and 5-5 in the minors. Partner then bid a natural 3NT, so clearly he has a good hand, about 15 points minimum. West should obviously be looking for slam with a combined 32+ points and a void in the opponent's suit. Why didn't he? Because he heard his partner's explanation?
- (5) East should convert to 5♦ of course, but he did not know that his partner's bid had shown both minors.

What happened? 5♣ made but scored a bottom as others were in 5♦+1 or 3NT+2.

The bottom lines: -

- If your partner gives an explanation of your bid during the auction, you are not allowed to 'hear' what he says. You cannot let what he says affect your bid, it is unauthorised information. West is obliged to look for slam in this scenario.
- Don't ask questions during the auction unless the answer is going to affect your bid – it only causes problems, as in this case. Leave your question until the auction is finished.
- Don't abuse the UNT and Michaels conventions.

And just one final point. As it happened, the result was bad for E-W. If it had turned out well for them then this North would have undoubtedly have called the director. I would have let the result stand as the whole problem was caused by North asking a needless question. Also, of course, it does not add up: 17 + 15 + opening bid = too many points in the pack.

A two-suited hand?

Board 4 from Friday 23rd

Dealer:	♠ K103		West	North	East	South
West	♥ A86					
both vul	♦ 432		pass	(1) 1♣	pass	1♥
	♣ AQ107		dbl	(2) 2♥ (3)	pass	4♥
			4♠ (4)	dbl	pass	pass
♠ Q8742	N	♠ J96	5♦	pass	pass	dbl
♥ K94	W E	♥ Q103	pass	pass	5♠	dbl
♦ Q10876	S	♦ J9	pass	pass	pass	
♣ -		♣ K6542				
	♠ A5					
	♥ J752					
	♦ AK5					
	♣ J983					

(1) There is a convention, common in Holland, where you can open 2♠ when weak with 5 ♠'s and a 4 card minor. But even if you do play that I would pass as with a void and a good 3 card ♥ suit you may miss a ♥ contract. So pass and hope to show your two suits later.

- (2) Hasn't it worked out well! A take-out double enables West to show his two suits and he does not need to worry about missing a ♥ contract as South has bid the suit. Perfect.
- (3) This is a poor bid. Sometimes it is correct to support with 3 cards, but not with a totally flat hand. Without West's double North should bid 1NT. After the double he could still do that, but I prefer pass to show a minimum hand. A redouble would be a Support Redouble (showing 3 ♥'s) but I believe that only Chuck (with me) plays that.
- (4) Now this really is a poor bid. The previous double showed the two suits and this hand has good defence against ♥'s. Pass is clear, and it would work out well as the opponents are in an impossible 4-3 fit game.

And what happened? Down 4, so 1100 away. And at the other table N-S were in 3NT going two off. The bottom lines: -

- If you open, partner responds and RHO bids (or doubles), then pass with a minimum hand.
- Only raise partner's possible 4 card major with 3 card support if you have shape.
- - 1100 really is too much when the opponents cannot even make game.
- If you have shown your hand already (the double with this West hand), then don't bid again - especially at the 4 level when vulnerable!

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: Pass and lead a ♣, thankful that partner's bid has solved your otherwise difficult lead problem. And why is this trivial hand in the quiz? One very experienced player actually found a 4♣ bid! What can I say? What would Marty Bergen say??
- Hand B: Pass. If you bid Stayman then a 2♠ response fixes you.
- Hand C: 3♣. Two of the club's 'leading' players may disagree with this. Fine, they are wrong. See Marty Bergen's comments earlier for what he thinks of pass. The modern trend for opening pre-empts is that they are lighter than they used to be. If you passed with this hand then you are living in the Stone Age and need to read a modern book, right Fred?
- Hand D: 1NT(15-18), some may prefer to double. Reasonable, and this will work out OK if partner bids a major, but not if he bids 1♦.

Monday 26/7/04

Friday 30/7/2004

1st = Jan/Jon 56%
 1st = Kenneth/David 56%

1st Chuck/Terry 66%
 2nd Dave/Bob 59%

We have something new this week, 'The Devil's Advocate' – another point of view. This is a contribution from another member. I guess that everybody is getting tired of the same old things every week in the news-sheet? Anyway, this member has commented that I concentrate on the negative - so this week I will favour hands that were well bid, sorry that the sheet is so short.

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

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A partner opens 1♠, what do you respond?
♠ 94	♠ AJ9	With Hand B partner opens 1NT and RHO overcalls 2♦.
♥ Q873	♥ J432	3♦ by you now is the Stayman bid and that's what you do.
♦ Q3	♦ 5	Partner responds 3♠, what do you do?
♣ AKJ73	♣ K10872	
Hand C	Hand D	(a) What do you open with Hand C?
♠ KQ875	♠ K10842	(b) Suppose that you open 1♠ and partner bids 3NT (13-15, two ♠'s, balanced); what now?
♥ A9	♥ A6	
♦ AKJ	♦ Q8	(a) What do you open with Hand D?
♣ Q85	♣ AQ54	(b) Suppose that you open 1♠ and partner bids 2♦/♥; what now?

4NT quantitativeBoard 11 from Friday 30th, love all

North (A)	South (C)	West	North	East	South .
♠ 94	♠ KQ875	-	-	-	1♠
♥ Q873	♥ A9	pass	3NT (1)	pass	4NT (2)
♦ Q3	♦ AKJ	pass	pass (3)	pass	
♣ AKJ73	♣ Q85				

1♠ is the obvious opening with this South hand – it is too good for 1NT. But what did you bid with Hand A at (1) in this week's quiz? 2♣? That would be my choice also as I would be afraid of missing a ♥ fit or possibly a ♣ slam. Anyway, this 3NT at (1) promised 13-15 points, balanced, with a doubleton ♠ and is an acceptable alternative I suppose.

And what did you bid with Hand C at (2)? There are just two alternatives – pass or a quantitative 4NT. North has a great ♣ suit but is minimum for his 3NT bid and so passed.

And what happened? The ♠A was onside and so 12 tricks were there. 3NT made just +1 at the other table. The bottom lines: -

- The jump to 3NT take up a lot of bidding space, make sure that it has a *precise* meaning in your partnership.
- 4NT after partner's 3NT is always quantitative (slam invitational and passable).

As promised, an article from a member (Chuck). Now I am the editor of this new-sheet and have been accused in the past of always having the last word. So I'll just say a couple of things and leave it up to you.

I don't understand point 4 about switching aces. Isn't it even worse for E-W if North has the \spadesuit A and South a black ace? Anyway, suffice it to say that I believe that my comments last week are 100% correct and I totally disagree with *everything* below.

As for point 2, preaching. At equal vulnerability the rule of 3 applies (see Appendix A in the 2003 yearbook). The *guideline* is that the hand should be 6 playing tricks and so this $3\clubsuit$ bid is $1\frac{1}{2}$ shy. But the over-riding factors are the quality of the suit and defensive potential. Simply re-read what Marty Bergen said.

As for point 6, Marty Bergen is an acknowledged expert and ten times USA national champion, I guess that he must have found a decent partner somewhere?

So let's have the last word from the Devil, I understand that the furnaces are kept going by burning Marty Bergen books: -

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

The weekly bulletin is usually full of negative comments. On occasion I (Chuck) will give you other points of view that are often neglected. Take this deal from news-sheet 90.

Dealer:	\spadesuit AJ6	West	North	East	South
West	\heartsuit AQ65	$3\clubsuit$	3NT	$4\clubsuit$	pass
Love all	\diamondsuit QJ54	pass	dbl	all pass	
	\clubsuit AK				

\spadesuit 97	N	\spadesuit KQ32
\heartsuit J	W E	\heartsuit K98432
\diamondsuit K962	S	\diamondsuit 10
\clubsuit QJ10987		\clubsuit 54

\spadesuit 10865

\heartsuit 107

\diamondsuit A873

\clubsuit 632

Other top players and I agree that Terry's comments are negative and not correct and that the $4\clubsuit$ bid is correct because: -

- 1- East has every reason to believe that opponents can make 3NT. – They can't because all cards are off.
- 2- West doesn't practice what he preaches. He has often, very often, said that the pre-empter should not be off more than 3 tricks non-vul and two tricks vul. He has a $4\frac{1}{2}$ trick hand. That is $4\frac{1}{2}$ tricks short of the nine that he bid.
- 3- He held six \clubsuit 's, not seven as he promised for a three level pre-empt.
- 4- Switch the aces in opponent's hands and the contract is down no more than two. Oh, if only he had a seventh club also.
- 5- I suggest that the CLUB SHEET take a more positive view and try not to highlight bidding errors of players but give positive comments on good play and good defence.
- 6- As far as Marty Bergen is concerned, I don't care what he has to say, EVER. He is known among top American and International players to be a radical bidder and cannot partner a top player.

Back to normal - this is me, Terry, again. So there you have it. It really should be a debate between Chuck and Marty Bergen, I just simply bid *exactly* as Marty sez with a hand ½ a trick stronger than Marty's. How am I to know that a 10 times national champion and author of *numerous best selling* bidding books has no idea what he is talking about, 'EVER'?

Let's leave it there.

An reasonable slam

Board 15 from Friday 23rd , N-S vul.

OK, so I'll try by best to find some good bidding. How about this slam from Monday?

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ Q7	♠ AK86	-	-	-	pass
♥ QJ53	♥ 2	1NT	pass	2NT (1)	pass
♦ A97	♦ KQ10864	3♣ (2)	pass	4♣ (3)	pass
♣ AQ94	♣ 32	4♠ (4)	pass	6♦ (5)	all pass

Now this is reasonable bidding to a reasonable contract, but I'm not convinced that it is perfect bidding. Let's have a look: -

- (1) This pair play 4-way transfers, so 2NT is a transfer specifically to ♦'s.
- (2) This is a super-accept, promising 3♦'s to an honour (A,K or Q).
- (3) And that was as far as the partnership had discussed. What should a 2nd suit here show? My preferred method is that a 2nd suit after a transfer (so 3♥, 3♠ or 4♣) here is natural and game forcing, I would have bid 3♠ just in case there is a 4-4 (or 5-4) ♠ fit. It is usually considered as bad practice to bid Blackwood with a weak doubleton.
- (4) Anyway, this had not been discussed and so West took the bid as ace (keycard) asking.
- (5) So East obviously wants to be in 6♦ but I have a problem with this last bid. There is an ace missing and partner may have a tenace holding in ♣'s or ♥'s. West should be declarer. The best bid at (5) is 6♣, a re-transfer. But I guess that it takes a regular partnership and years of practice to iron out these niggling little details?

And what happened? 6♦ made. 3NT was bid and made an overtrick twice and the last table played in 5♦ for the wooden spoon.

The bottom lines: -

- Don't play in 5♦ if 3NT is a sensible option.
- If you're playing in ♦'s, then bid slam!
- 4-way transfers really work.
- A transfer (to any suit) followed by a new suit is best played as natural and game forcing.
- Unlike transfers to a major, a super-accept of a minor suit transfer only promises 3 card support and there may be a better fit elsewhere.
- It is usually better for the 1NT opener to be declarer.
- Understand re-transfers.

A Moysian Fit?

Board 24 from Friday 30th, love all

North (B)	South (D)	West	North	East	South .
♠ AJ9	♠ K10842	pass	pass	pass	1NT (1)
♥ J432	♥ A6	2♦	3♦ (2)	pass	3♠
♦ 5	♦ Q8	pass	pass (3)	pass	
♣ K10872	♣ AQ54				

(1) So what do you think of this 1NT opening with Hand D? It is 15 points, and in my opinion a good 15 points (the doubleton queen is a –ve factor but the 5 card suit with a 10, another decent 4-carder and two aces more than compensate; the hand is close to 16 points).

(2) Stayman.

(3) If South had bid 3♥ in response to Stayman then North would undoubtedly have raised to 4♥. But should he raise 3♠ to 4♠? With 9 working points and a singleton in the opponent's suit, I think that he should. The Moysian fit will play nicely with the short hand ruffing ♦'s and you never know, maybe partner has 5 ♠'s!

And what happened? 3♠ made +3, but to no avail as they bid 4♠ (making +1) at the other table.

The bottom lines –

- Know your Stayman etc after intervention.
- 9 points opposite a 1NT opener usually invites. If the opponents interfere so that there is no longer an invitational bid then you have to take the decision – so bid game with a good 9 count.
- Moysian fits play well when it is the short hand that gets the ruffs.

Bidding Quiz Answers

Hand A: Most people (me included) would bid 2♣. I guess that 3NT is not unreasonable at pairs where you hope it scores more than a possible 4-4 ♥ fit. But it's not my cup of tea.

Hand B: 4♠. RHO's overcall has taken away your invitational options, so do you bid game (4♠) or not? I would.

Hand C: (a) 1♠. It's too strong for 1NT.

(b) 4NT, quantitative. 3NT is reasonable but a bit too wet for me.

Hand D: (a) 1♠ or 1NT? It depends upon your style. This hand is a good 15 points and I prefer 1NT. North said that he preferred 1♠ as no response will embarrass you. I beg to differ....

(b) ...If you open 1♠ then you have no decent rebid over partner's natural 2♦ (or 2♥).

2♠ is acceptable but is usually a 6 card suit. 2NT is 12-14 and this hand

Hand E is much too good. 3♣ is game forcing and this hand is not good enough.

♠ A6 That is why most experts agree that you should open 1NT with a (semi)

♥ K10842 balanced hand within your 1NT range unless you have a good rebid.

♦ AQ54 Swap the suits around to get Hand E then 1♥ is fine as you always have a

♣ Q8 comfortable ♦ rebid.



Club News Sheet – No. 92

6/8/2004



Monday 2/8/04

Friday 6/8/2004

1st Mike/Kees 59%
 2nd Dave/Tonni 55%

1st Joe/Tonni 69%
 2nd Chuck/Terry 63%

Bidding Quiz

Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A
♠ 1084	♠ Q742	(a) partner opens 1♦, what do you respond?
♥ 632	♥ 10	(b) but if LHO opens 2♠ and partner doubles what do you do?
♦ AKQJ87	♦ A94	Do you open Hand B in 1 st seat vulnerable?
♣ Q	♣ AJ1074	
Hand C	Hand D	What, if anything, do you open with Hand C?
♠ AQJ973	♠ 53	With Hand D LHO opens 1♣ and RHO bids 1♥.
♥ J94	♥ Q94	You play weak jump overcalls, what do you bid at unfavourable vulnerability. 2♦, 3♦ or meekly pass?
♦ -	♦ KJ7653	
♣ J1053	♣ K5	
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E it's favourable vulnerability. LHO opens 1♣, partner passes and RHO bids 1♦. (a) What do you do?
♠ AK106	♠ 975	(b) Suppose you pass. LHO now bids 1NT round to you. What do you do now?
♥ K63	♥ Q102	
♦ Q97	♦ K106	Do you open the totally flat Hand F when vulnerable in 1 st seat?
♣ Q82	♣ AK109	
Hand G	Hand H	With Hand G partner opens 1♣.
♠ AK6	♠ 102	(a) what do you bid?
♥ AKJ872	♥ AKJ87	(b) Suppose you bid 1♥ and partner bids 1♠. What do you do now?
♦ 102	♦ AK96	
♣ 63	♣ 63	With Hand H partner opens 1♣, what do you bid?

Is it forcing?

Is the last 3♥ bid in these sequences forcing or not?

Sequence J 1♣ - 1♥ - 1♠ - 3♥
 Sequence K 1♣ - 2♥ - 2♠ - 3♥

Good enough for slam?

Board 18 from Friday 6th

Dealer:	♠ 53		<u>Table A</u>			
East	♥ Q94		West (G)	North (D)	East (B)	South
N-S vul	♦ KJ7653		-	-	1♣ (1)	pass
	♣ K5		1♥ (2)	pass	1♠	pass
			4NT (3)	pass	5♥	pass
♠ AK6	N	♠ Q742	5NT	pass	6♣	pass
♥ AKJ872	W E	♥ 10	6NT	all pass		
♦ 102	S	♦ A94				
♣ 63		♣ AJ1074	<u>Table B</u>			
	♠ J1098		West	North	East	South
	♥ 653		-	-	1♣ (1)	pass
	♦ Q8		1♥	3♦ (4)	dbl	all pass
	♣ Q982					

Table A: (1) Did you open Hand B this week? Only 11 points, but I too would open this East hand. It conforms to the rule of 20, the ♣ suit is respectable and there is an easy (1♠) rebid.

(2) Did you make a jump shift (2♥) here with Hand G in this week's quiz. It really is better than 1♥ with this particular hand type and I go into it in detail in the quiz answers.

(3) And I don't like this. This is a good 15 count and an excellent suit, but it's not good enough to launch into slam with no fit. There are various options (maybe 2♦ - the 4th suit) but 4♥ is reasonable and simple.

Table B: (4) A weak jump overcall. The weak overcall should be a six card suit; but this one has more holes than a sieve. It is nowhere near good enough at adverse vulnerability when both opponents have bid – it is asking for minus 800.

And what happened? 3♦ went for -800 and 6NT was two down. The bottom lines: -

- With no fit you usually need 33 points for 6NT. Somewhat less with a long suit but 26 is nowhere near.
- You need a good suit to pre-empt when both opponents have bid.
- You need a good suit to pre-empt at adverse vulnerability.
- You need a good 7 card suit to pre-empt at the 3 level vulnerable.
- There is often little effect in pre-empting when both opponents have bid.

A Word about suit quality

KJ7653 is very poor. A worse case scenario is that it makes zero tricks.

QJ10987 is excellent - remember my much-debated 3♣ pre-empt in news-sheet 90?

It is 'only' 3 points but is *guaranteed* to make 4 tricks as trumps. So it could be 4 tricks difference between these two holdings, think about it. Good intermediates are important in a long suit. Holes are very bad. I would not have opened 3♣ with KJ7653.

'An ideal pre-empt is topless with a good body'. – Marty Bergen

With a long solid minor, think 3NT

Board 22 from Monday 2nd, love all

An easy 3NT was missed at every table on Monday: -

Dealer:	♠ 1084		<u>Table A</u>			
East	♥ 632		West	North (A)	East (C)	South
E-W vul	♦ AKQJ87		-	-	pass (1)	1♦
	♣ Q		pass	3♦ (2)	all pass	
♠ 62	N	♠ AQJ973				
♥ Q85	W E	♥ J94	<u>Table B</u>			
♦ 1062	S	♦ -	West	North	East	South
♣ A8642		♣ J1053	-	-	2♠ (1)	dbl
	♠ K5		pass	3♦ (2)	all pass	
	♥ AK107					
	♦ 9543					
	♣ K97					

Table A: (1) So did you open 2♠ with Hand C in this week's quiz? I would not pass and prefer either 2♠ or 1♠.

(2) and what did you respond with Hand A(a) in this week's quiz? You have game going values and must find a forcing bid. You know that partner has a miserable ♦ suit and his most likely hand type is a balanced 12-14. If you bid 3♦ partner will pass with that hand type! I go into it in the quiz answers, but 3NT is best if you do not play inverted minors.

Table B: (1) This East chose to open 2♠, fine by me.

(2) and what did you respond with Hand A(b) in this week's quiz? You have game going values and must find a forcing bid. 3♦ is encouraging but not forcing and partner will pass with a minimal double. In this situation with a long running minor all you need from partner for 3NT to make is a ♠ stop and the only way to find that out is to bid 3♠.

And what happened? The bidding was as Table B at three tables, 3♦ was passed at *every* table.

The bottom lines: -

- If you have game going values do not make an invitational bid.
- A cue bid of the opponent's suit often asks for a stop (it does in this situation).
- With a long solid minor, think 3NT.
- Learn inverted minors.

The next page was contributed by Chuck: -

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

The weekly bulletin is usually full of negative comments. On occasion I (Chuck) will give you other points of view that are often neglected.

The following hand is from news sheet 89.

'It is better to live with the devil you know than the one you don't know'.

The 3♣/♦ convention over Partner's opening 1NT

Terry often asks me what I would do on a hand then disagrees only to write about it in his news sheet. With Hand L you were asked what to bid after partner had opened 1NT and this is what Terry said:

Hand L	'3NT. Now I'm sure that somebody out there will tell you that there is a convention where 3♣ shows a hand 5-5 in the minors and weak; and 3♦ shows a hand 5-5 in the minors and strong. I am a fan of good conventions but this one is not good in my view. Anyway, is this hand weak or strong? I'm a simple soul, I don't want to play in 3 of a minor, I don't want to play in 5 of a minor, I want to play in 3NT; so that's what I would bid. And that's what Dave, my partner, did bid at the table.'
♠ 9	
♥ 103	
♦ A9872	
♣ AJ874	

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	It is obvious that I (Chuck) am the only player that plays 3♣/♦ over partner's 1NT opening as weak/strong. Terry claims that his partner made the correct bid of 3NT... Well, I made the same bid at the table because my partner doesn't play the convention.
♠ xxx	♠ Ax	♠ xxx	
♥ Ax	♥ Axx	♥ AK	
♦ KQJ	♦ KQJ	♦ Kxx	
♣ KQxxx	♣ Kxxxx	♣ Kxxxx	

But if he did I would bid 3♦ as a game force. This gives partner a choice of games or slam try. He can always play 3NT if he chooses; I have described my hand and he controls the auction. We have lost nothing. He is in a great position to find the slam. What if he holds a hand like Hand 1 or Hand 2? I can make up a dozen such hands but why bore you? How about a 13 point hand like Hand 3? It has great potential for slam.

Hand 4	Hand 5	As for as playing this 3 of a minor convention, you should have 6 or 7 points with the points in the minors but with 5 points (Hand 4) I would bid 3♣, weak. Terry, don't you transfer to 2 of the major with a hand like Hand 5? Of course you do. For a hand evaluator you can do better.
♠ x	♠ Q10xxx	
♥ xx	♥ xxx	
♦ Qxxxx	♦ xx	
♣ Kxxxx	♣ xxx	

BECAUSE YOU DISAGREE IT DOES NOT MAKE YOU CORRECT.
That's why there is a game of bridge. Otherwise we would all have the same score...

So there you have it, this is me (Terry) again. As Chuck finished his article with a question and a challenge for me to do better I feel entitled to reply and I don't need big bold capital letters to put my views across: -

The bidding quiz is Basic Standard American. 3NT is the best bid in this scenario and is what Chick admits to bidding with his partner.

He correctly says that I would transfer to 2♥/♠ with a weak 5 card major (as Hand 5). But that is at the two level. I would take my chances in 1NT with Hand 4 as opposed to playing in a minor at the 3 level. Either may work out best but the 3♣ bid can be used for another useful purpose.

I am not disputing that Hand L could investigate slam (but not opposite Hand 3) but you need the tools and most non-advanced pairs do not have them. Now other people have said that the news sheet is sometimes complex and so I avoid more advanced conventions. However, one that I mentioned last week is 4-way transfers. Playing these you can specifically transfer to either minor. If you wish to investigate slam with Hand L then it's easy: -

1NT - 2♠ - 2NT/3♣ - 3♦.

The 2♠ is a transfer to ♣'s and the subsequent 3♦ shows 5-5 and is game forcing, usually with slam interest. Thus you do not need the otherwise very useful direct 3♦ bid; you do it via transfers and this had the additional advantage that opener's 2NT/3♣ bid shows/denies 3♣'s to a top (AKQ) honour.

Now Chuck has quoted a few hands, said to bid 3♦ strong, and simply stated that slam is there. That is not good enough – you have to do better. You have to explain how you bid these slams, and how you avoid bidding bad ones. Let's start with Chuck's Hand 1.

Hand 1	Hand L	How do you proceed after West has opened 1NT and East has bid 3♦ (either via a transfer or Chuck's direct 3♦ bid)?
♠ xxx	♠ x	Simply asking for aces works, but not if the major suits in one of the hands are interchanged. With a weak doubleton East cannot ask for aces and West can only do so if he can establish that East has a singleton ♠. Are you going to explain how West does this next week?
♥ Ax	♥ xx	
♦ KQJ	♦ Axxxx	
♣ KQxxx	♣ AJxxx	

And let's have some more of these strong 5-5 minor suited hands. These are extracted from a recent book on 1NT openings – where all of the bidding *is* explained. It's sometimes a bit complex and so I'll just illustrate some of the problems here.

West	East	Here 6♦ is the contract. Not only does West need to establish that East's singleton is ♠'s rather than ♥'s, but he needs to be sure about the ♣K. Not only do you need to play Roman Keycard Blackwood (RKCB) but in these situations where a player is 5-5 opposite a 1NT opener you need to play Double RKCB (DRKCB) so that key cards in both suits are counted.
♠ J72	♠ 9	
♥ AJ74	♥ 63	
♦ KQ76	♦ A8532	
♣ AQ5	♣ KJ874	

West	East	And how about this example from the book? How do you get to 7♦? Either West has to establish that East has a ♥ void or East has to use Exclusion Double Roman Keycard Blackwood (EDRKCB). How many people have even heard of it?
♠ KJ4	♠ A32	
♥ Q84	♥ -	
♦ AQ96	♦ KJ732	
♣ KJ5	♣ AQ987	

West	East	And in this example East ends up doing the asking. He immediately discovers that a keycard is missing and so slam is only secure if West has <i>both</i> the minor suit queens. How do you find this out below the level of 5♣ if West has just one or none? Your DRKCB asking bid needs to be at a low level and you need to be able to ask for key queens.
♠ Q92	♠ A	
♥ QJ42	♥ 3	
♦ KQ6	♦ A8753	
♣ AQ5	♣ K98742	

If you start off on the road to slam, you have to know how to reach good ones and avoid bad ones. I note that in the actual deal with Hand L one pair did reach a hopeless 6♣. Just goes to prove my point?

Bidding these minor suit slams is not trivial. Not only because people tend to ignore them and bid 6NT, but because simple Gerber or Blackwood or RKCB with 4NT as the asking bid with a minor suit as trumps are totally unsatisfactory. Chuck, once you have opened a can of worms (3♦ strong) it is not good enough to just leave them wriggling around. You have to tidy it up and tell people how to reach these minor suit slams that are often difficult to bid. I believe that it's too complex for these news-sheets, agreed? Perhaps it is better to bid a simple 3NT after all?

But if anybody does want to know the answers (DRKCB, EDRKCB, shortage ask, minor suit queen ask etc.) then I can copy a few pages from the book or lend it to you.

The bottom lines: -

- Once you start using more advanced tools to invite slam, you also need advanced tools to ensure that you bid only good ones.
- It looks like this 3♣/♦ convention works OK. I'm not so sure about the weak 3♣ but the 3♦ is obviously very descriptive. However, you get exactly the same (and more) using transfers to the minors.
- Using transfers to the minors you still have 3♣/♦ as their normal bid. Standard is that they are single suited looking for slam.
- But playing minor suit transfers it is better to transfer with a big minor suited hand and so you can choose another option for 3♣/♦ (I like splinters - also for 3♥ & 3♠).

♠ xx	And one final point. Bridge is a little like politics, where you can manipulate the facts and figures to mean whatever you wish. In bridge you can always construct a hand to support your point of view. Take this hand which opens 1NT.
♥ Axx	
♦ AKx	
♣ Axxxx	A pretty unspectacular minimal 15 count, but it makes 6♣ opposite Hand 4 where Chuck simply bids 3♣, weak. So does that mean that Hand 4 should go looking for slam?

Sound Defence

Board 4 from Friday 6th, both vul

The Devil says that I concentrate on the negative too much and he suggested that I write up this defensive play from Friday: -

Dealer:	♠ J32	West (F)	North	East	South (E)
West	♥ A954				
E-W vul	♦ 32	1♣ (1)	pass	1♦	pass (2)
	♣ J763	1NT	pass	pass	pass (3)

♠ 975	N	♠ Q84
♥ Q102	W E	♥ J87
♦ K106	S	♦ AJ852
♣ AK109		♣ 54

♠ AK106	
♥ K63	↑
♦ Q97	DUMMY
♣ Q82	

Pretty straightforward bidding, but a few points are worthy of attention: -

- (1) The West hand has 12 points but is totally flat (so deduct a point) and so not normally worth an opener; but here the three 10's more than compensate.
- (2) Did you pass with Hand E in this week's quiz? To make any sort of noise with this flat hand when both opponents have bid and are unlimited would be foolish. This flat hand has good defensive potential (as we shall see shortly).
- (2) Did you pass again with Hand E in this week's quiz? This flat hand should defend.

So onto the play. North led the ♥4 to the ♥K and the ♥6 was returned – won by West when North obviously ducked. The ♦K came next followed by the run of the ♦10 which lost to South's ♦Q. I believe that this is the correct way to play the ♦ suit. So everything is fairly routine and South is on lead in this ↓ position, what do you lead?

	♠ J32	
	♥ A9	
	♦ -	
	♣ J763	
♠ 975	N	♠ Q84
♥ 10	W E	♥ J
♦ 6	S	♦ AJ8
♣ AK109		♣ 54
	♠ AK106	
	♥ 3	↑
	♦ 9	DUMMY
	♣ Q82	

Obviously you are going to lead the ♥3 for partner, otherwise he will not play with you again; but you should always try to help partner. If you simply lead the ♥3 now is partner going to find the killing shift of the ♠J once he has cashed his ♥ tricks? Possibly, but it's so much simpler if you tell him what you have.

The answer is to lead the ♠K and then the ♥3. North took his two ♥'s and the ♠J back ensured two down.

And what happened? 1NT going minus two was a gratifying result for N-S, especially as 2NT was made by E-W at the other table.

The bottom line. Try to help partner.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: (a) 3NT. If you do not play inverted minors then this type of hand is difficult. Neither 2♦ nor 3♦ are forcing in standard methods. You cannot bid a 3 card major and the 'usual' solution is to bid 2♣. This really is absurd with a singleton and so the best bid is 3NT unless you play inverted minors.
- (b) 3♠. This promises a long solid minor and asks partner to bid 3NT with a ♠ stop.
- Hand B: Open 1♣. It's a good ♣ suit, it conforms to the rule of 20 and has an easy ♠ rebid.
- Hand C: I would open 2♠ with 1♠ a close 2nd. Some players will not open a weak two with a void; some players will not open a weak two with a 3 card ♥ suit; some players will not open a weak two with another 4 card suit. And me? I think 2♠ is fine. A 1♠ opening is also very reasonable - it's one short of the rule of 20 but the excellent ♠ suit, the void and the 3 card ♥ suit are adequate compensation. If the ♠ suit was weaker with more points in the other two suits then pass would be best.
- Hand D: Pass. Meow. A two level overcall (2♦) should be close to an opening hand. A weak jump shift at the 3 level needs to be *much* better than this. Anyway, when both opponents have bid a pre-empt has less effect and, what's more, a double by the next player would be for penalties. Pass is the only sensible option.
- Hand E: (a) Pass. It is too dangerous to bid with a flat hand when both opponents are unlimited. This is a good defensive hand and if you set the opponents you will get a good score. If you set them by two tricks you get the magic +200.
- (b) Pass. This flat hand should be happy defending 1NT. Getting 6 or more tricks in defence should be better than declaring and trying to make 8 tricks with this flat hand when you may not even have a fit.
- Hand F: It's worth a 1♣ opener. The three 10's and sound ♣ suit easily compensate for the totally flat shape.
- Hand G: (a) 2♥. The jump shift is played a strong by most players and this hand is a classic example. It should be a long (5+, preferably 6), strong, virtually self-sufficient suit, strongly suggesting that suit as trumps (when a major). It is forcing to game.

Time for a minor digression. I have witness countless occurrences of people making a jump shift with a suit like AQ97 just because they have an opener opposite partner's opening. This is incorrect. You should make the jump shift only with a very good (5+, usually 6 card) suit, especially if you would be fixed for a 2nd bid if you do not jump shift. Once you have made a jump shift you can then take it easy as the auction is forcing to game.

Remember: -	1♣ - 1♥ - 1♠ - 3♥	is not forcing	Sequence J
but	1♣ - 2♥ - 2♠ - 3♥	is game forcing.	Sequence K

- Hand G: (b) If you chose 2♥ at (a) then you have no further problems now. After 1♥ it's cont. a bit difficult. It's not so easy to show this great ♥ suit as 3♥ is not forcing. A 4th suit 2♦ or a simple 4♥ are sensible but not totally satisfactory options. The hand is not good enough to launch into slam with Blackwood when there is no fit. This is a classic example of why you should jump shift at (a) – you have no sensible 2nd bid.
- Hand H: 1♥. I made this hand up (it's not just the Devil that can make up hands) to emphasise the points I mentioned above. Here you should not jump shift as you are not sure that ♥'s is the best strain and you have an easy forcing ♦ bid next go.



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.



Monday 16/8/2004

Friday 20/8/2004

1st Tonni/Dave 58%
2nd Guy/Jean 56%

1st Tonni/Joe 63%
2nd Bob/Dave 60%

Good show Tonni. It's quite a while since anybody has completed 'the double'.

Bidding Quiz

Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hand A | Hand B | With Hand A partner opens 1 ♣
(a) What do you respond?
(b) Suppose that you choose 1 ♦; partner then bids 1 ♥. What do you bid now? |
| ♠ J4
♥ KQ9
♦ QJ85
♣ QJ96 | ♠ A84
♥ KQJ93
♦ KQ106
♣ 6 | What do you open with Hand B? |
| Hand C | Hand D | With Hand C partner opens 1 ♥, what do you bid?

With Hand D partner opens 2NT
(a) What do you bid?
(b) Suppose you transfer with 3 ♦ and partner bids 3 ♥, what do you do now? |
| ♠ A
♥ K876
♦ AJ102
♣ AKQ3 | ♠ Q1096
♥ J9743
♦ -
♣ AQJ4 | |
| Hand E | Hand F | (a) What do you open with Hand E?
(b) Suppose that you open 1 ♣, then what do you bid after partner responds 1 ♥?

(a) What do you open with Hand F?
(b) Suppose that you open 1 ♦. Then what is your rebid when partner bids 1 ♥ or 1 ♠? |
| ♠ A632
♥ Q4
♦ AK
♣ KQ854 | ♠ A98
♥ KQ7
♦ AJ1093
♣ 106 | |

What does it mean?

What does the last bid mean in the following auctions?

- Sequence G: 1NT - 2 ♦ - 2 ♥ - 2 ♠ - 3NT - 4 ♣ ?
- Sequence H: 1NT - 2 ♦ - 2 ♥ - 2 ♠ - 2NT - 4 ♣ ?
- Sequence J: 1NT - 2 ♦ - 2 ♥ - 4 ♣ ?
- Sequence K: 1NT - 2 ♦ - 2 ♥ - 4NT ?
- Sequence L: 1 ♥ - 4 ♣ ?
- Sequence M: 1 ♥ - 4NT ?

The Devil is off on the dusty road to hell (yet another one bites the dust).

It's the end of an era, the end of life as we know it?... This time Chuck is chucked out for good! It really is unfortunate that such a fine player is totally unable to adapt to playing with 'less gifted' players. A very brief summary of what happened this time

On Monday 2nd Chuck encountered Don and Sid at the table. On the first board Chuck was declarer in a ♠ contract. Holding solid ♠'s down to the 10 between dummy and himself he led a small ♠ from dummy. Next player played low and Chuck detached the ace from his hand. The next player (Sid) saw the ace and followed small. Chuck then replaced the ace in his hand, insisting that it had not been played. The only logical reason for this behaviour is that he wished to needle the opposition.

On the very next board Chuck was again declarer. He led a card and Don discarded. Chuck then asked Sid the meaning of the discard. Sid replied that they had no special understanding and that the card was a card that Don wished to discard. Now this full explanation would be enough for most players, but not Chuck. He continued to bombard Sid with meaningless questions.

The next Friday I gave Chuck a **very** firm ticking off. Most players would have realised that they were within a whisker of being expelled from the club, but apparently not Chuck. Instead of keeping a low profile and hoping that the incidents would blow over he '*outdid himself with stupidity*'. His reaction was to type up a little memo quoting the rules that allow him to retract cards played and harass opponents with questions to his heart's content.

His antics may or may not be within the letter of the law, I don't care. This type of arrogant behaviour will not be tolerated in this club any more. In his short time at the club he has already received one warning (do the laws allow you to walk out and desert partner after three boards?) and also been expelled for one month for a separate incident(s). He now receives a life ban - I can do without the hassle. I do not need a vote this time, and I'm pretty sure what Don, Sid, Alex, Jeff,..... to name but a few, would say.

I gave the above dismissal notice to Chuck on Friday 20th. He decided to address the club; his only 'theme' was his opinion of me and the way I run the club. I did not realise that anybody could cram so many four-letter words into two sentences. Support for his views was the stunned silence, perhaps stunned by the language?

During his tirade he accused me of being a liar. Really? But I do note that in his little memo he says that I threatened to ban him if he asked questions about discards. This is complete fabrication (with numerous witnesses to back me up). What I did say was that he would be banned if he could not behave as a normal civilised human being (or words to that effect). He cannot, fine; he's banned.

It really is a shame that decent players (such as Chuck and John Gavens) cannot be civil to people that they consider to be inferior players. I'm sure that everybody agrees that there is no room for these rude people in our club? Let me know if you support my decision - I'll keep your views anonymous if you wish.

But I do still have some Chuck material. And if anybody sees Chuck then they may like to give him my response to his 'expert' bidding overleaf, but I guess he'll just tear it up?

I will be only too pleased to continue to publish these gems from Chuck if he has any more (but I'll delete the 4-letter words). The ping-pong is challenging and it appears that I can even play it against his 'experts': -

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

The following is reproduced for your reading pleasure. Please note this problem hand. A local expert (I believe that Chuck is referring to me, Terry, here) does not advocate playing at the three level opposite a strong NT opening facing 5-5 in the minor suits with 5-7 points in the minors and a minimum of an 8 card fit. But is willing to play at the two level facing 0 points and a possible 7 card fit. I suggest you (I suppose that Chuck is referring to me, Terry, here?) play along the lines of the international pros. With this hand partner opens 1NT, what do you bid?

- ♠ 85 The experts say: 'You don't need any strength to use a Jacoby transfer
♥ 96542 bid. 2♦ asks opener to bid 2♥ and you will pass. There's no guarantee
♦ 87 that 2♥ will be better than 1NT but the odds are in favor'
-
- ♣ 10763

It's me (Terry) again. What is Chuck's point? I have absolutely no idea, have you? I have repeatedly said to transfer with a 5 card major with 0+ points. What has this to do with bidding 3♣ with 5-7 points in the minors and 5-5 in the minors? I guess Chuck has simply lost his marbles again? And I have not said that playing in 3♣/♦ with such a hand is unwise, just that I will not waste the 3♣ bid to do so. I am of course flattered that Chuck suggests that I can play along the lines of the international pros, but I note that Chuck has failed to find one of his peers bidding 3♣. And here's another offering where Chuck quotes an 'expert' bidding sequence: -

West (F)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ A98	♠ QJ2	-	-	pass	pass
♥ KQ7	♥ 104	1♦	pass	2♣	pass
♦ AJ1093	♦ Q54	3NT	all pass		
♣ 106	♣ KQJ74				

This hand is of interest since there is a bid that the local expert (Terry) said is wrong and has five books to prove it wrong. I maintained that 1♠ - 2♣/♦/♥ - 3NT says that the opener has 14-16 HCP's. If that is good enough for the world's best players it's good enough for me.

The above paragraph is Chuck's. So who's the liar? And this time it's in print. To start with Chuck previously maintained (as do some experts) that the 3NT jump here is 15-17 (not 14-16). I have not said that the meaning is wrong, but that it is not standard. And I quoted three books and not five. So Chuck has made three points here and every one is a lie!

But let's not get personal and look at this 'expert' bidding a little closer. The hand was not published because of the bidding but the play (West also mis-played the hand and went down). The bidding is appalling. This West hand has 14 HCP's but is worth much more. The robust 5 card suit, the intermediates and two tens make it worth 16 points. Agreed? Then why not open 1NT as *most experts* would? Did you open 1NT with Hand F in this week's quiz – I hope so.

This 15-17 jump 3NT rebid is used when you have a hand unsuitable for a 1NT opening (a singleton). If partner bids your singleton at the 2 level then you bid 3NT. This hand is totally unsuitable for this treatment as it is a fine 1NT opener. A 1♦ opening leaves you (or Chuck) with no sensible rebid over 1♥/♠ (luckily partner bid 2♣). This is terrible bidding.

I believe that there is little that this 'expert' West can teach me about NT bidding. It may be good enough for Chuck, but it's not good enough for me.

Who's an expert?

Chuck gave me a list of America's current top 120 players. His point being that Marty Bergen was not included and so his opinions are meaningless. I note that Chuck's 'World's best' West in the last hand is not included in the list either, and he is an active player.

I've said this before. I have absolutely no problem with people (Chuck, Hans, whatever) criticising me - I'll just write it up. But can you please make it a bit more challenging? It also helps if you are right once in a while.

Don't jump straight into Blackwood

Board 21 from Monday 16th, N-S vul

West (C) East

♠ A ♠ -
♥ K876 ♥ AQ10954
♦ AJ102 ♦ KQ43
♣ AKQ3 ♣ 874

Table A

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

Table B

West	North	East	South
-	pass	1♥	pass
2♣ (2)	pass	2♥ (6)	pass
7NT (7)	all pass		

I only know the bidding at two tables,
the other two tables subsided in 6♥.
Let's have a look: -

Table A: (1) Only 11 points. But the points are in the long suits and the ♥10,9 in a six card suit are excellent. This is a very sound opener.
(2) This pair play this as ace asking. I don't like it. To start with I play 4♣ here as a splinter (short ♣'s agreeing ♥'s), but with this hand I would prefer to take a slower approach and find out more about opener's hand (see Table B).
(3) 5♣ asks for kings after Gerber.
(4) East lied about having a king. I believe that he was afraid of getting too high as he was minimum for his opening. Now one should never do this (lie during Blackwood) but in my opinion this is by no means a minimum opener. I mentioned at (1) that I considered it very sound; and if partner does not bid ♠'s it is even more so.
(5) Here we see the problem with the 'leap into ace-ask mode'. West can only count 10 top tricks. Even if partner had correctly shown a king then it's still not certain that 7NT is there. Under the circumstances 7♥ is a fine bid.

Table B: (2) But West really can make life much easier by taking it slowly to start with. 2♣ was just waiting to see what East would rebid.
(6) 2♥ in this situation really must be a six card suit.
(7) West now has much more to go on. The knowledge of a six card suit makes all the difference. There are now 11 top tricks and the ♣J with a king are sufficient for 7NT. You could ask for kings – but it's simplest to just pull out all of the bidding cards at pairs scoring. At teams I would certainly bid 7♥.

The bottom lines: -

- Take it nice 'n easy (to start with). It's usually best to explore the hand (with forcing bids of course) before making the ace ask.
- Don't lie with your responses to Blackwood/Gerber.

Explore other options before resorting to the Moysian fit Board 26 from Monday 16th

Dealer:	♠ J4	West	North (A)	East	South
East	♥ KQ9				
both vul	♦ QJ85	-	-	pass	1♣ (1)
	♣ QJ96	pass	1♦ (2)	pass	1♥
		pass	4♥ (3)	all pass	
♠ 962	N	♠ AQ85			
♥ 83	W E	♥ J1054			
♦ K43	S	♦ 972			
♣ A10872		♣ 54			
	♠ K1073				
	♥ A762				
	♦ A106				
	♣ K3				

There are 4 obvious losers in ♥'s but NT makes 9 or 10 tricks. So what went wrong?

(1) This pair play a short ♣ (can be two card – but only when exactly this shape). 2NT is a sound alternative at (2). Everything is then fine up to (3). Is there a better bid than 4♥? Now North knows that South has exactly 4 ♥'s and so it's just a 4-3 fit. With a weak doubleton this often plays quite well, but in this situation it's best to ask South about his ♠'s – he may even have a respectable 4 card suit there – as in this case.

The solution is to bid the 4th suit. In this particular sequence opinions differ as to what 1♠ means. Some play it as natural (and forcing) and play a jump to 2♠ as the artificial 4th suit. Others play that 1♠ may or may not be natural.

Let's assume that you play this 2nd approach, then you bid 1♠ at (3). South then bids 2♠, natural. North then bids 3NT knowing that there is a 4 card ♠ suit opposite.

And if you play that a jump to 2♠ is the 4th suit forcing bid it's equally easy. South then bids 2NT, confirming a ♠ stop. But North is not sure that one stop is enough, so bids 3♥. This is natural and forcing after invoking the 4th suit – it promises 3 card ♥ support and expresses doubt about the ♠'s. South then has an easy 3NT bid.

North-South were discussing this when East chipped in with his opinion. He stated that 4♥ is the correct bid with the North hand. Now this East (guess who) is not a beginner, in fact he claims to belong in the 'top lines'. I am confused as to why such a player does not understand 4th suit forcing. And if you don't understand it, isn't it better to simply listen and learn? 4♥ is a lousy contract.

And another interesting point about the North hand. It contains two 4 card suits headed by the QJ. These sort of holdings are frequently very productive in NT but will often not be able to produce tricks in a trump contract – especially if there is a shortage of trumps.

And what happened? 4♥ was minus 1. At other tables 2♥ was bid and made exactly once, 3NT made exactly and 2NT made plus two.

The bottom lines.

- Do not be too quick to charge into a Moysian fit.
- Understand 4th suit forcing.

Thinking in defence?

Board 19 (rotated for convenience) from Monday 16th

Dealer:	♠ 97	← DUMMY				
North	♥ 72		West	North	East	South (B)
E-W vul	♦ 983		-	pass	pass	1NT (1)
	♣ AQJ873		2♠ (2)	3♣ (3)	3♠	pass
			pass	4♣ (4)	pass	4♥
	N	♠ K106	pass	pass	pass	
	W E	♥ A854				
	S	♦ 542				
		♣ 1092				

You are East and defending 4♥ with the auction given (yes, I know it's a strange bidding sequence and I'll go into it later). Anyway, West leads a ♠ and your ♠K is taken by declarer's ♠A. Declarer then leads a ♣ to the ♣J and a ♦ to his ♦Q and partner's ♦A.

♠ -		Partner then leads a small trump which you win with the ♥A.
♥ 7		So you are East in this position, what do you lead?
♦ 98		This is one of your better days and you are not yet under the
♣ AQ873		influence of the dreaded Mekong/coke. So you think.
N	♠ 10	The bidding has been a bit weird but surely declarer had 5 ♥'s
W E	♥ 854	and presumably has ♥KQJx left. Declarer also must have the
S	♦ 54	♦K to justify his 1NT opening and ♦ lead from table. Partner
	♣ 109	presumably has 6 ♠'s for his vul vs not overcall. Low and
		behold – you have a complete picture of the hand. Declarer
		must have started with: ♠ Ax ♥ KQJxx ♦ KQxx ♣ xx.

So what do you do? Declarer must now have ♠ - ♥ KQJx ♦ Kxx ♣ x. If you let declarer win the next trick he will clear trumps and run 5 ♣ tricks. Partner's ♣K is now singleton and

		so you majestically toss the ♣10 on the table to cut
♠ -		communication with dummy (while partner still
♥ 7		has a trump to ruff the ♣Q) and await the applause?
♦ 98		In a perfect world, yes. But this was the actual
♣ AQ873		position. Your ♣10 here presented declarer with
		two ♣ tricks which were otherwise unreachable.
♠ J53	N	♠ 10
♥ 10	W E	♥ 854
♦ J7	S	♦ 54
♣ K5		♣ 109
		So what can I say? Tough luck? Perhaps, but it
♠ 8		really does make a mockery of logical thinking
♥ KQJ9		when somebody opens 1NT with a singleton
♦ K106		(Hand B) – and it's against the rules.
♣ -		Partner's vul overcall with QJxxx was no thing
		of beauty either (but that did not affect East's
		logic in leading a ♣).

Hand B		The bottom lines: -
♠ A84		a. Do not open 1NT (1) with a singleton.
♥ KQJ93		b. Do not make a vul overcall (2) of a strong NT with QJxxx.
♦ KQ106		c. 3♣ at (3) shows this hand exactly, do not bid again at (4).
♣ 6		d. Think in defence - provided that everybody at the table
		knows about (a).

Bidding after a 2NT opening

Board 18 from Friday 20th, N-S vul

West	East (D)	West	North	East	South
♠ AK7	♠ Q1096	2NT	pass	3♣ (1)	pass
♥ AQ2	♥ J9743	3♦	pass	4♥	all pass
♦ AQ102	♦ -				
♣ K108	♣ AQJ4				

(1) Stayman

East was not happy about his bidding and asked how slam should best be investigated. Actually it's not that easy as there could be slam in any of 3 suits. But with a 5 card ♥ suit it's best to start off with a Jacoby transfer opposite a 2NT opener. A new suit is then game forcing.

So the bidding should start: - 2NT - 3♦ - 3♥ - 3♠ - ?

3♠ is natural and forcing, promising 5 ♥'s and 4 ♠'s. West would then bid either 3NT or 4♥. If 4♥ then East could try Blackwood. If West bid 3NT then East should bid 4♣. This is natural after partner's 3NT bid and is obviously looking for slam if there is a ♣ fit. East has thus shown his 4504 shape. West then bids 4♥ and East may again choose Blackwood if he wishes.

And what happened? 4♥ made +2. This was a clear top as the slam was not found at the two other tables. Well, actually, that's not quite true; one pair somehow managed to end up in 6♠ going one down. And quite how the other pair ended up in 2♦ by West I have no idea.

The bottom lines: -

- Stayman and transfers still apply after a 2NT opening.
- A transfer followed by a new suit is natural (promising 5-4) and game forcing.
- 4♣ after partner's 3NT bid is natural and forcing.

And consider these auctions after a 1NT opening: -

(G) 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 2♠ - 3NT - 4♣ ?

(H) 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 2♠ - 2NT - 4♣ ?

What does 4♣ mean?

In (G) it is natural, looking for a ♣ fit with slam in mind. Partner would never remove 3NT into 4♣ if not looking for slam.

In (H) 4♣ is asking for aces. Gerber is always a jump to 4♣ after partner's last natural bid was NT.

Help Suit game Try after a Jacoby Transfer

Board 16 from Friday 20th, E-W vul

North	South	<u>Table A</u>			
		West	North	East	South
♠ AKQ10	♠ 9	pass	1NT	pass	2♦
♥ Q95	♥ J10762	pass	2♥	pass	2NT (1)
♦ K964	♦ Q853	pass	4♥ (2)	all pass	
♣ Q8	♣ AJ6				

<u>Table B</u>			
West	North	East	South
pass	1NT	pass	2♦
pass	2♥	pass	2NT (1)
pass	3♥ (2)	all pass	

As always, let's look at the auctions: -

Table A: (1) So is this hand worth a 2NT game try? I think it's close. I did bid 2NT here on Friday but I would have passed if we were playing super-accepts; I feel that 4♥ is probably against the odds with most North's containing just 3 card ♥ support.

(2) This North decided to accept the game invitation.

Table B: (1) This was our auction and we had not agreed to play super-accepts and so I bid 2NT. Note that 2NT is the only sensible game try available here despite the singleton. A 3♦ bid would be game forcing and 3♥ is invitational but promises 6 ♥'s.

(2) So should this hand pass, bid 3♥ or bid 4♥? I would not pass but it's close between 3♥ (a sign off) and 4♥.

But is there a more scientific way for North to bid at (2)? Yes, the answer is the help-suit game try. A bid of 3♣ or 3♦ asks for help in that suit. Partner then bids 3♥ without a decent holding in the suit or 4♥ with a decent holding. With this particular hand North would ask for help with 3♦ and East's ♦ Q853 is just enough to accept.

And what happened? 4♥ was by no means solid. It was bid twice; making once and going down once. 3♥ made +1.

South 2	South 3	
♠ 9	♠ 9	Now as I said, game is by no means certain but is maybe worth a go with this particular deal. But consider these two similar South hands. Let's assume that North makes a 3♦ help suit game try. South 2 most certainly has ♦ help and should bid 4♥. South 3 has no help at all in ♦'s and should bid just 3♥.
♥ J10762	♥ J10762	
♦ QJ53	♦ 8532	
♣ A96	♣ AK6	

The bottom lines: -

- After a Jacoby transfer and a subsequent 2NT bid then opener's normal options are pass (to play in 2NT), 3 of the major (to play), or 3NT/4♥.
- But for more sophisticated partnerships there are two additional options; help suit game tries in the minors. But note that this is by no means standard practice - I doubt if many non-expert partnerships have ever discussed the bids.

Balanced hand bidding

Board 11 from Monday 16th, love all

North (E)	South
♠ A632	♠ 974
♥ Q4	♥ A8752
♦ AK	♦ 753
♣ KQ854	♣ J9

Table A

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

Table B

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
pass	1♣ (1)	pass	1♥ (2)
pass	2NT (3)	pass	pass (5)

Table A: (1) So what do you open with this North hand? It's 18 points so normally too strong for 1NT. But, as I always say, high cards belong in long suits and so the ♦AK are not worth 7 points. But ♣KQxxx is worth more than 5 points. All-in-all I would say it's slightly too good for 1NT and I would open 1♣ although 1NT is also quite reasonable. So you chose to open 1♣, fine.

(2) But do you respond with this hand? It's only 5 points but if 1♣ gets passed out you are unlikely to get a good score. I too would bid 1♥.

(3) Now you correctly opened 1♣ but what is your rebid now? You chose not to open 1NT because the hand is too strong, but what now - 1♠, 2♠ or 2NT?

I believe that all of these bids have their merits. 1♠ is not forcing, but then if partner passes then it's unlikely that there is game. 2♠ is normally considered as game forcing but I don't think that this hand is worth it. Also, I would like a more shapely hand and/or more points in ♠'s for this bid.

(4) Now 2♠ is normally considered as forcing here but East apparently did well to pass?

Table C: (3) That leaves 2NT. This bid shows a semi-balanced 18-19 points and not forcing – perfect. I think 2NT is best, but is it denying a 4 card major? Strictly speaking, yes. But 2NT is rarely passed and a ♠ fit will usually subsequently come to light. Anyway, it's better than forcing to game with 2♠.

(5) But this is one of those rare occasions where 2NT is passed out.

And what happened? 2NT made exactly but 2♠ went one down. At the other two tables the contract was 1NT by North. I have no idea how this can happen, if North does open 1NT then surely most South's would transfer and thus have 2♥ (a good spot) as the final contract?

The bottom lines: -

- A 1NT opening is 15-17. Only open 1NT with 18 points if you feel that the hand needs downgrading. AK doubleton is a downgrade and so 1NT is acceptable with this particular hand.
- If partner opens 1NT, then transfer with a 5 card major regardless of points.
- It is acceptable to jump rebid 2NT even though it may 'deny' a 4 card ♠ suit.
- After this 2NT rebid one can play Checkback (or New Minor Forcing) to establish if there is a 5-3 ♥ fit or 4-4 ♠ fit.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: (a) 1♦ or 2NT. Either is quite acceptable.
(b) 1♠. The hand is marginal as to whether it should bid game or not, but you are committed now. 2NT would be a poor bid now with such poor ♠'s and an obvious ♠ lead from the opponents (you should have bid 2NT last time if you only wanted to invite game). You have to find out about partner's ♠ holding (he could easily have a 4 card suit). It depends upon how you play your 4th suit forcing in this situation. I think is best to play that 1♠ is either natural or not (but forcing). 4♥ here is a very poor unilateral bid; and much the same can be said about 3♥. Don't opt for the Moysian fit if 3NT is a very real possibility.
- Hand B: 1♥. An easy one, but somebody did have a ♥ mixed up with his ♣(s) and opened 1NT.
- Hand C: 2♣. You should take it easy and try to find out more about partner's hand. If the ♠ was a small one then a 3♠ splinter would be in order, but it is unwise to splinter with a singleton ace (or king). To jump into your ace-asking bid is unwise; as I said, take it easy and you can always ask later.
- Hand D: (a) 3♦. Things are slightly different over a 2NT opening (as opposed to 1NT). With 5♥'s and 4♠'s opposite a 2NT opener it's best to transfer ...
(b) ... and then bid 3♠. Natural and forcing, showing 5♥'s and 4♠'s.
- Hand E: (a) 1♣. It's a decent 18 points and so a little too strong for 1NT. However, the ♦AK are poor cards and a 1NT opening is a reasonable alternative.
(b) 1♠ or 2NT. I prefer either of these two non-forcing bids to 2♠ which is game forcing. It's a decent hand but not worth a game force.
- Hand F: (a) 1NT. With this excellent 5 card suit and intermediates this is not a 14 count. It is easily worth a strong 1NT opener.
(b) I've no idea. The hand is much too good for 1NT (12-14) and 2♥ or 2♠ are silly (why go for the Moysian fit when NT could easily be the best strain). You have no decent rebid because you did not open 1NT.
- Sequence G: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 2♠ - 3NT - 4♣ ? 4♣ is natural and forcing
- Sequence H: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 2♠ - 2NT - 4♣ ? This time 4♣ is a jump after NT, it's Gerber.
- Sequence J: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 4♣ ? 4♣ here is best played as ace (or keycard) ask, with ♥'s as trumps
- Sequence K: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 4NT ? 4NT here is quantitative.
- Sequence L: 1♥ - 4♣ A splinter. ♣ shortage and agreeing ♥'s.
- Sequence M: 1♥ - 4NT ? This is the ace (or keycard) ask. But it usually is not good practice to leap straight into Blackwood.



Monday 23/8/2004

Friday 27/8/2004

1st Tonni/Dave 63 %
 2nd Hans/Jean-Marc 56 %

1st Bob/Dave 55%
 2nd Jan/Tonni 54%

This time it's Dave who gets the elusive double, good show; he also did a few weeks back but I failed to mention it in news-sheet 87.

Some people have left the club recently but we also have some new blood. Thus I would like to explain just a couple of obvious 'rules'. This is a friendly club and most people do not take it too seriously. With a lot of beginners/improving players I would appreciate it if there was no psychic bidding. And please do not open 1NT with a singleton.

If you have a hand that you find difficult to bid – just ask me (even during the bidding is OK if I am not playing). Chuck is gone now and nobody else minds me helping out a beginner/improver occasionally at the table. I'm sure that everybody will agree that having a pleasant game in a pleasant atmosphere and improving the standard at the club is more important than who actually wins in a particular week?

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

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A partner opens 1 ♠ and RHO overcalls 2 ♣. (a) what do you bid? Suppose that you choose 2 ♥ then (b) what do you bid if partner raises to 3 ♥?
♠ A62	♠ 73	
♥ QJ10962	♥ AKQ532	
♦ QJ	♦ K	
♣ Q3	♣ KQ85	With Hand B RHO opens 2NT, what do you bid?
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C RHO opens 2NT, (a) what do you bid? Suppose that you double, this gets passed round to opener and he bids 3 ♦. (b) What do you do now? (c) What would dbl mean?
♠ AK72	♠ J	
♥ KQ2	♥ K10	
♦ Q4	♦ J1072	Do you open with Hand D, non-vul in 2 nd seat?
♣ KQJ7	♣ QJ9876	
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E partner opens 2NT, what do you bid? With Hand F you are in 4 th seat. (a) Would you open after 3 passes? (b) What would you bid if partner opened 2 ♠?
♠ 93	♠ AQ	
♥ K832	♥ J1073	
♦ KQ4	♦ Q95	
♣ Q982	♣ K952	
Hand G	Hand H	Do you open with Hand G? With Hand H LHO opens 1 ♥, partner bids 2 ♣, RHO and you both pass. LHO then bids 2 ♥, partner bids 3 ♣ and RHO passes. What do you do?
♠ K65432	♠ Q1097	
♥ K62	♥ K72	
♦ 2	♦ J864	
♣ A73	♣ A9	

Separating fact from fiction

Hasn't it been exciting recently, with Chuck showing his literary prowess with two pages of 'facts or fiction' mumbo-jumbo? I did, however, manage to decipher some of it and here's my response to a number of points.

- 1- As Maria said in the Sound of Music, let's start at the very beginning. Chuck's notes are stated to be comments on news-sheet 97. Now Chuck may possibly be quite intelligent, but isn't it pushing it a bit to comment on something that I have not yet written?
- 2- I said in sheet 93 that the bidding challenges are pretty meaningless. Chuck rather rudely disputed this, so let's see what a real expert says. This time it's Michael Rosenberg from his book *Bridge, Zia and Me*. Rosenberg is No 94 on Chuck's list and so is eligible to give his expert opinion: - *'Bidding contests are not real Bridge, the whole thing is a sham. The contestants are often not monitored and even if they are they are permitted to retract and change bids. The hands are specially selected and should not be bid in the same way as you would in real bridge.'* Rosenberg then gives a list of silly things that you have to do to get a good score. Looks like I've found yet another expert who agrees with me and disagrees with Chuck, eh? 'Not a good shot'.
- 3- Raising a 3♣ pre-empt to 4♣ with a small doubleton ♣ when the opponents bid 3NT is ludicrous. End of conversation. The Jury is out on this one.
- 4- Chuck had ordered a director's guide through the post. The postage was more than the cost of the book. He offered it to me at the bargain price of twice its face value. I already have three director's books and so declined his generous offer.
- 5- My final word on a sequence like 1♠ - 2♣ - 3NT. *Some* experts play that the 3NT bid is the same range as an opening 1NT (so 15-17). I explained the theory of this last week. Chuck has now introduced yet another red herring of 14-17? Get it right.
- 6- Chuck does not like Don's remarks about George W. Bush. I did not tell Chuck to take it outside, it was Chuck who said that he would punch Don on the nose if he continued.
- 7- I banned a Scandinavian for 'slapping cards'? 'Everybody' knows that he was banned immediately when he punched another player in the club. Guess I've got rid of Chuck just in time before he punches Don (or me)?
- 8- Chuck says nobody quit because of him and he wants names. How about Don and Sid?
- 9- And the kangaroo court (or trial of a monkey)? The last time Chuck behaved like an ape I had a pole to see if he should be evicted. Of the sixteen responses 14 said it was totally my decision. I think that that is a mandate to make a decision this time, don't you? Incidentally, the other two suggestions? One was to ban him for life. The only one to remotely defend Chuck was Clive. He said that a warning was not enough and a ban for a short period should get the message across. Obviously it didn't – remind me to have a word with Clive next time I see him. But for Clive, Chuck would have been totally banned.
- 10- Chuck was not banned from a club in the USA? Perhaps – I have no idea. I am simply repeating what Chuck had previously told me. Either he was lying then or he is lying now. Who cares?
- 11- Chuck does not want his name in the news-sheets. I complied for a while, but then I feel that it's off once he starts mentioning me in his sheet...?
- 12- Several people told Chuck that they did not want him barred? That is not consistent with the results from the last pole. Maybe he threatened to punch them? And is there *anyone* out there who thinks that the club would be a better place with long time members like Don and Sid absent and the trouble-making Chuck present?

13- A message from Terry to return? Hans asked me if it was OK if Chuck returned and I said ‘no problem’ as he had served his ban. Doubtless Hans will confirm this?

14- Chuck says that he did not challenge me to write up the 2♦ doubled hand. Oh yes he did.

On 12-1-04 after the Monday session Chuck and Hans were sitting together just outside the coffee shop (where the fish tank now is). They called me over and proceeded to tell me all the things that I was doing wrong in running the club. Chuck criticised the news-sheets and said ‘*why don’t you write up your (Terry’s) bad bids like the pass of 2♦ doubled on Friday*’. I’m sure that Hans remembers having the conversation, he may or may not remember this exact request of Chuck’s. I remember everything very clearly. I guess Chuck is simply going the way of Ronald Raegan, Charlton Heston etc.?

15- ‘For your reading pleasure’ I repeat the contested deal: -

Dealer:	♠ J1062		West	North	East	South
East	♥ AQ9			(me)		(Chuck)
Both vul	♦ 1075					
	♣ K86		-	-	pass	1NT
			pass	2♣	pass	2♦
♠ 85	N	♠ A943	dbl	pass (1)	pass	pass (2)
♥ 10753	W E	♥ 862				
♦ AQ982	S	♦ KJ				
♣ 52		♣ 10973				
	♠ KQ7					
	♥ KJ4					
	♦ 643					
	♣ AQJ4					

The contract went one down, 200 to E-W. 3NT went 2 down at other tables so also 200 to E-W.

I wrote it up and gave a preliminary copy to Chuck the next Friday. I said that my pass of the double at (1) was correct and that Chuck cannot pass at (2), he must bid. Chuck said that I should bid 3NT at (1). He then had another look at the deal and stated that both the hand and bidding was not as he remembered! I ‘jumped up’ to retrieve the board - the boards had not been shuffled yet from the previous week and I needed to get the board before it was. So Chuck then had to admit that the hand was correct. He then tried to say there was no double. A really pathetic ‘shot’. Chuck claims to know all about the rules. His last bid was 2♦, so why did he subsequently place a pass card on the table at (2) if the bidding was finished (if there was no double)? And if no double then why complain about my bid at the end of the hand when -200 was entered on the score-sheet (undoubled, -100 would have given us a top)? Is the man an idiot? – don’t answer that just yet.

Anyway, I subsequently wandered over to our opponents on the deal and they confirmed both the hands and the bidding. If there was no double then there would be no story. And Chuck continued to say that I should have bid 3NT at (1); he may only now accept that I am right after an ex World champion has confirmed it. Chuck’s pathetic lies and excuses on this deal defy logic. And I choose my words carefully, backed up by *evidence* and *witnesses* – there is no way that it is logically possible that Chuck is not lying here. He did not miss the double, the hand was as I stated and he did demand that I write it up. He presumably knew that this scenario would not be in any bidding book (West’s double is silly as he would be on lead against a NT contract) and so I could not prove my case; but I guess that Chuck did not expect me to write off to a real expert to prove him incorrect yet again.

Three indisputable ‘*blatant lies*’ on one deal, not bad even by Chuck’s unenviable standard.

- 16- Chuck says that I did not print a contribution from Ian and that I had said that I would write up people's comments when given to me. Untrue yet again. Let's quote me from news-sheet 10: - *'I will happily print anything sensible from anyone'*. Pretty clear, eh? Unfortunately Ian's input was not sensible. It was simply a page on how Ian enjoys playing with Chuck and what a wonderful person Chuck is. It was utter, complete, nonsense that was apparently written with Chuck looking on! Ego?
- 17- But it did Ian no good. The last time that Chuck partnered Ian was 3rd May. Despite a respectable 2nd place finish Chuck came up to me after the session and said *'never again'*. Stating that he would prefer not to play than partner Ian.
- 18- And that brings me onto the next topic. Chuck thinks that he can waltz into a club and expect the director to find him a compatible partner. That becomes increasingly difficult when Chuck refuses to play with some (Jeff, Ian, Alex, to name but a few). And these three are certainly not beginners. So that just leaves the much more experienced players; unfortunately many of these (Joe, Bob ...) have already told me that they do not wish to partner Chuck either. Sometimes a director's life is difficult.
- 19- Chuck says that I did not write up the fact that he informed me that a jump shift rebid is game forcing in Standard American. Let's quote from news-sheet 30: - *'The jump shift (1♦ - 1♥ - 3♣) is also very strong. As Chuck points out, this is normally played as game forcing these days. In the old days of Acol it was not, but it was very rarely passed below game.'* - looks like I did actually write up what Chuck said I didn't! In England this is commonly played as not strictly game forcing. I believe that Hans also plays it that way? - Quite reasonable if you play strong two's or Benjamin. Incidentally, I was asked if I could repeat the article on Benjamin twos (it appears later) - Ian may not find my news-sheets instructive but others most certainly do. But I suspect that Chuck is also lying here as I noticed that Ian picked up numerous back issues on Monday - excellent, that's why they are there. Anyway, in Standard American the jump shift rebid is game forcing
- 20- Chuck says that I drive people away from the club. On the day of the 'ticking off' he told me that Richard had left because of comments by me. I was a little upset at this information as I always try to give polite constructive comments to people who appreciate them. But maybe there is a God, the very next Friday (20th) Richard appeared and confirmed that he appreciated my help, that he had been absent in America and had never said anything of the kind to Chuck. So is Richard lying or is it Chuck? I have not been able to get in touch with Bill. Bill was at the club on the very first day and never missed a session except for a brief hospital visit. After five years he left the club because, as I understand it, one player was very rude and called him a liar! It most certainly was not me. It is unlikely that Bill left after 5 years because of me, if anybody sees him could they please confirm his reason for leaving (and ask him to return).
- 21- I simply did not understand Chuck's garbage about me changing the scores. I gave Chuck a zero against the Scandinavians on the second board when he psyched again. I will do the same to anybody who psyches on two boards in one session.
- 22- Double standards? I don't think so. Chuck quotes the case of a Jeff psyche. That is, to my knowledge, Jeff's first and only psyche and it may or may not have been deliberate. He has been warned. But he most certainly did not psyche again on the next board! Chuck was penalised for his 2nd psyche.
- 23- I waited 3 weeks to ban him? Chuck provoked Don/Sid on Monday 9th. I 'ticked him off' on Friday 13th. He wrote his silly note about being able to behave any way he wishes on Monday 16th. I did not read it on the Monday or he would have been banned then. I banned him on Friday 20th. I make that 11 days, not 3 weeks. 50% out (that's his success rate on a good day). I guess that Chuck's math skills are fading along with his memory?

- 24- And onto the BIG final points – America. Don, Sid and myself are not anti-American; we are anti-bush. A few years ago everybody would talk about the weather. Now, every time we turn on the TV we get bush, bush, bush... Ten or twenty years ago nobody really cared who the president of the USA was, now it's different. The president of the USA rules the world. He is so powerful that he can ignore the United Nations, the Geneva convention, World Trade Organisation, World opinion, the environment, climate change, greenhouse gas emissions and anybody or anything. He can do whatever he wants regardless of the consequences or what the rest of the World says. I am most certainly not going to say that people cannot discuss the 'ruler' of the World at our bridge club; and if there was anything nice to say about him I'm sure that someone would say it?
And isn't everybody totally disgusted with the American adverts slandering Kerry's war record? One fact is indisputable (well maybe Chuck can dispute it?), Kerry was in Vietnam 'fighting for his country'. Bush was not. And what can we say about Clinton? Clinton (and thus America) was respected the World over, by Arab and Jew alike. America treated him appallingly. Seems it's OK to lie about a war costing billions where hundreds of Americans and others are dying, but to lie about a trivial affair is a no-no.
- 25- Proud to be an American? And so you should be, but unfortunately there is not much to be proud of these days. It will take decades for Kerry (or whoever) to undo the damage that bush has done in 4 short years. Name one country that is now friendly towards the USA! Israel of course and maybe Australia, but that's it. There's Tony and a few others, but they do not have the backing of their people. The Spanish people demonstrated that at the poles. True friendship is not gained by threats nor bought with dollars. Bush has completely squandered the good-will that he received after 911. And I really despise people who repeat the old chestnut about the USA saving the World in WW2. It is the last resort of a pathetic person who cannot argue logically. Hitler was a tyrant and GB went up against him in 1939. It took USA until Japan attacked until they did the right thing. And America did not win the war; Great Britain, the British Empire and all of the free world collectively did. Talk about ego! It is people like you (Chuck) who bring the good name of America down. Your behaviour is an insult and embarrassment to people like Bob, Richard and millions of other Americans.

The above two sections are pretty much what I said when Chuck accused me of going 'bonkers'. Chuck asked Bob to back him up, seems Bob largely agrees with me.

So there you have it. A comprehensive, legible list of facts and figures; and hopefully the final words. There is no logical reply and I would urge any friend of Chuck's to tell him to '*go quietly, very quietly*' with what little dignity he has left. I can run circles around him with simple logic, knowledge and facts; his silly little notes only make him look even more stupid. You are akin to a man in quicksand – the more you squirm, the worse it gets. Give up gracefully. It is no contest, I make it 25-0. Eat your heart out, go eat some 'freedom fries'.

I'm sure that everybody joins me in wishing Chuck all the best and hope that he gets the psychiatric help that he so clearly needs. Perhaps he will be able to fit some sessions in between his elocution, math, history and grammar lessons? I understand that they are developing a drug for the memory loss. And with less bridge and so more free time, how about a visit to the cinema? I can recommend Fahrenheit 911. It may seem a flight of fantasy at times but it is a true documentary directed by a patriotic American. The main star is a comedian. The fact that it won 1st prize at an international festival says volumes about what the rest of the World think about bush; but bush and Chuck do not give a hoot!

I have not been rude to Chuck, nor do I wish to be. But he has somewhat provoked me as well as others and so I say: -

You, sir, are a cad and a bounder. Be gone, I say, be gone.

Benjamin Twos

As requested, the article on Benjamin twos: -

Now I am one of those guys who like to have their cake and eat it (perhaps explains my weight?). I certainly like to be able to open a weak two in the majors, but I also like strong Acol type twos in the majors. Fortunately, this was all solved by Albert Benjamin. Playing Benjamin twos, the traditional 2♣ opening (23+ or a game forcing hand) is replaced by 2♦. This then leaves 2♣ free to show a strong two in either major (partner normally relays with 2♦ and you then bid 2♥/♠). Now there are numerous variants as to exactly what the 2♣ and 2♦ opening bids (and subsequent rebids) mean. I shall simply describe my preferred Benjamin variation etc.

Playing Benjamin twos the opening bids are: -

- 2♣ Strong but not game forcing. Either 8-9 playing tricks in an unspecified suit or a balanced 22-24.
- 2♦ Game forcing. 25+ if balanced
- 2♥/♠ weak, 6 card suit, 6-10.
- 2NT 20-21 balanced.
- 3NT pre-emptive (gambling 3NT). long solid minor, nothing outside.

After a 2♣/♦ opening, I prefer an automatic relay of 2♦/♥. Rebids then mean: -

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥ | 8 playing tricks in ♥'s – non-forcing (but rarely passed) |
| 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♠ | 8 playing tricks in ♠'s – non-forcing (but rarely passed) |
| 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♥ | 9 playing tricks in ♥'s – non-forcing (but very rarely passed) |
| 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♠ | 9 playing tricks in ♠'s – non-forcing (but very rarely passed) |
| 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♣ | 9 playing tricks in ♣'s – non-forcing (generally an unbalanced hand) |
| 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♦ | 9 playing tricks in ♦'s – non-forcing (generally an unbalanced hand) |
| 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT | 22-24, balanced |
| 2♦ - 2♥ - 2NT | 25+, balanced, game forcing |
| 2♦ - 2♥ - any suit | natural, game forcing |

As I said, there are numerous variants of Benjamin twos, but I prefer this one because you never have to bid 3NT (this leaves partner the option of Stayman and transfers etc. when he is bust and you are 25+ and balanced). There is a rather better/more complex variant based on this scheme which also includes 4441 type hands.

Note that a 2♦ opening is always game forcing.

Note also that an Acol two is normally forcing. Playing this version of Benjamin the sequence 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥/♠ is not strictly forcing as a stronger opening hand would rebid at the 3 level.

Incidentally, Benjamin twos are normally associated with Acol – but there really is no dependence. You can play any variation of Benjamin twos with Standard American, 2/1 or any natural system.

If the bidding starts 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥/♠ then this is not strictly forcing, but responder needs very little to make a bid. I covered this in detail in news-sheet 72: - A Benjamin 2♥/♠ after 2♣ is strong and virtually forcing – only pass with a real heap. Responder to a Benjamin (or strong) two should take a very optimistic view of any assets that he has and bid with a reasonable expectation of making a trick.

Maybe Hans is right?

Board 11 from Friday 20th, love all

North (A)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ A62	♠ K7543	-	-	-	1♠
♥ QJ10962	♥ AK4	2♣	2♥ (1)	pass	3♥
♦ QJ	♦ K64	pass	4♥ (2)	all pass	
♣ Q3	♣ 102				

A fairly automatic auction to the best spot, I'm sure you'll agree? But not everybody thinks so. Let's have a look: -

- (1) Now I was North. What did you bid at (1) with Hand A in this week's quiz? You have 3 card support for partner's ♠'s but I believe that 2♥ is better. This is a very robust suit and it may just be that there is a ♠ loser (as in this actual case) if you play in ♠'s.
- (2) But what did you bid at (2) in the quiz? I chose 4♥, did you? You have an enormous double fit and game seems odds-on.

Now you would think that that's that and there is no reason to discuss the hand? Not so when Hans is at the table. Hans was West and maintains that the North hand should pass 3♥. Why would he make such a seemingly unnecessary comment?

♠ KQJ754 Because this was the actual South hand and there are 4 top losers and so
♥ AK4 4♥ went down (as did 4♠/5♠ at other tables).
♦ 64
♣ 102

As always you can construct countless hands where 4♥ makes and you can also construct countless hands where the opponents cash 4 top tricks. It is not possible for North to establish if there are 4 top losers. I will leave it up to you to decide if Hans is right or if, as Chuck often accused me (falsely) of, he is a results merchant.

As I said last week, I am always willing to print any criticism of my bidding "right or wrong". Everybody makes poor bids on occasion; and when I do, I admit to it. This was not one of those occasions in my view. Hans says it was. No problem, bridge would be boring if everybody thought the same.

And what happened? 4♥ went minus one. At the two other tables 4♠ went minus one and 5♠ went minus two. I guess somebody even went looking for slam?

Too good for a pre-empt?

Board 15 from Friday 27th

Dealer: ♠ A43
South ♥ QJ106543
N-S vul ♦ K
♣ Q8

♠ Q1097 N ♠ K2
♥ K72 W E ♥ A98
♦ J864 S ♦ Q5
♣ A9 ♣ KJ6543

♠ J865
♥ -
♦ A109732
♣ 1072

Table A

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

Table B

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

Very reasonable bidding at both tables, here's my opinions: -

Table A: (1) This hand would be fine for a weak 2♦ opener if it were not for the 4 card ♠ suit. I too would pass.

(2) But what should North open? 1♥ or 3♥? 12 points is normally too much for an opening pre-empt but if partner is a passed hand it's OK as there probably is no game. Also the singleton ♦K may be worthless. I would also open 3♥, remember that a 3 level pre-empt at unfavourable vulnerability must be a decent hand - but I would not be critical of a 1♥ opening.

Table B: (2) This North chose 1♥, fine.

(3) If you repeat an overcall it should be a 6 card suit and a decent hand, this hand just about qualifies.

(4) What did you bid with Hand H in this week's quiz? Partner has shown a good hand with 6 ♣'s, you have a ♥ stop if you are declaring and I think that 3NT is a fine bid.

And what happened? 3NT made comfortably. 3♥ was the contract at the two other tables and went either one or two down.

The bottom lines: -

- Do not open a weak two with an outside 4 card major.
- A 3 level pre-empt at unfavourable vulnerability must be fairly respectable.
- In 3rd seat you can pre-empt with opening values because partner is a passed hand.
- If you overcall and then repeat the suit after partner has passed, it's 6 cards and a decent hand.

p.s. This hand is a very nice example of how the bidding at the club is improving (perhaps with the aid of my news-sheets? Or it could be tuition from Chuck?). I made four 'bottom line' comments here, and all of them were positive! In my opinion there was not a bidding error by anyone at all of the tables. Good show everybody, very gratifying.

See, Chuck. I can take constructive criticism and do not now always concentrate on the negative!

Stayman after 2NT

Board 10 from Friday 27th, both vul

West	East (E)	West	North	East	South
♠ AJ2	♠ 93	-	-	pass	pass
♥ AQ94	♥ K832	2NT (1)	pass	3NT (2)	pass
♦ AJ10	♦ KQ4	pass	pass		
♣ A107	♣ Q982				

This was the bidding at all 3 tables on Friday. Obviously 3NT makes but 4♥ is a far better contract. Let's have a look at the bidding: -

(1) The 2NT opener is 20-21 (or 20-22, depending upon partnership agreement). This West hand has 20 points and is totally flat (so deduct one point). However, 4 aces are a big + and the two 10's and a 9 make it a sound 2NT opener.

(2) But I don't like this. What did you bid with Hand E in this week's quiz? With a 4 card major and a weak doubleton you should bid Stayman. The 4-4 fit will normally produce an extra trick.

♠ AJ102 And what happened? Well actually West had the ♠ 10 instead of the ♦ 10 and
♥ AQ94 so the ♠'s were adequately covered. But that does not detract from the fact
♦ AJ hands of type E should bid Stayman. And if you allow 5 card majors in
♣ A107 your 2NT opener (most pairs do) then you may otherwise miss a 5-4 ♥ fit!

The bottom line. Stayman and transfers still apply after a 2NT opener.

A reverse?

Board 17 from Friday 27th, love all

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ 7	♠ KQ93	-	pass	pass	pass
♥ AK94	♥ 863	1♦	2♣	2♠ (1)	pass
♦ QJ1094	♦ A865	3♥ (2)	pass	4♦	pass
♣ Q106	♣ 82	pass	pass		

4♦ is not a good contract and should go down. What went wrong?

(1) East has a problem here. With no interference he would have bid 1♠. A negative double is an option but E-W do not play them (why not?). So East does not have a good bid. It's 9 points but the points are in the long suits and Axxx in partner's suit is a big +. I think that 2♠ is better than a feeble 2♦. If you do not play negative doubles then I assume that this only guarantees 4 cards.

(2) So this is the real point of the hand. Partner's 2♠ bid has denied ♥'s. A 3♥ bid here is a reverse and promises a stronger hand. West has two sensible options, 2NT (12-14) or 3♦.

The bottom lines: -

- A reverse shows a big hand (16+).
- If partner has responded at the two level in a new suit then 2NT shows 12-14.
- But if partner has simply raised your suit (say East bid 2♦ at (1)) then 2NT at (2) would show a big hand (18-19 points).
- A negative dbl at (1) only guarantees one 4 card major – this is because it is difficult to bid this type of hand otherwise.

A 3♣ opener?

Board 17 from Monday 23rd, love all

West	East (D)	West	North	East	South
♠ A109763	♠ J	-	pass	3♣	-
♥ J7	♥ K10	5♣ (1)	all pass		
♦ K5	♦ J1072				
♣ AK4	♣ QJ9876				

So did you open 3♣ with Hand D in this week's quiz. It looks like some followed my and Marty Bergen's advice and opened 3♣. They got a good score. West has a difficult decision at (1); 3♠, 4♣ and 5♣ all have their merits. 3NT does not. This West chose 5♣; it went one down for a 2nd top. It was only beaten at one table when the 3♣ pre-empt meant that N-S could not judge the hand and so got too high in 4♥.

The bottom lines. Non-vul, this East hand is a classic 3♣ opener despite what Chuck says. It gets a good board here. It will usually get a good board if you have a sensible partner. It would have got a good board when I bid it with a similar hand a couple of weeks back if Chuck could only keep quiet and let the opponents play in a hopeless 3NT.

A 2♠ opener?

Board 23 from Monday 23rd, both vul

West (G)	East (F)	<u>Table A</u>			
♠ K65432	♠ AQ	West	North	East	South
♥ K62	♥ J1073	-	-	-	pass
♦ 2	♦ Q95	2♠ (1)	pass	pass (2)	pass
♣ A73	♣ K952	<u>Table B</u>			
		West	North	East	South
		-	-	-	pass
		pass (1)	pass	pass (3)	

Table A: (1) What did you open with Hand G in this week's quiz? It looks like a classic (top-of-the-range) weak 2♠ to me.

(2) And what did you do with Hand F after partner opened 2♠? You should pass. 2♠ will be an excellent spot and there certainly is no game.

Table B: (1) This West chose to pass. It is a matter of style, but I play that there is no hand that is too good for a weak 2♠ that cannot open 1♠, i.e. I do not allow a 'gap'. This hand is not good enough for 1♠.

(3) Did you open Hand F in 4th seat in this week's quiz? It just about qualifies as an opener in 1st-3rd seat (rule of 20) but I would not argue with pass, AQ doubleton is very bad. In 4th seat things are different. The ♠ suit is all important and the rule of 16 (suit length + ♠ length) applies. This hand is nowhere near (14) and should certainly pass in 4th seat.

And what happened? 2♠ made +1 for the top score. So opening at (3) may have worked on this occasion, but only because partner has the ♠'s and should have opened.

The bottom lines: My preference is to have no gap between a 1♠ and 2♠ opener. With a 6 card suit, if it's not good enough for 1♠ then open 2♠. The only exception would be if there was an additional 4 card ♥ suit.

Add up the points!

Board 10 from Monday 23rd

Dealer: ♠ 109865
East ♥ 8
both vul ♦ 1083
♣ 6432

Table A

West North East South (B)
- - 2NT (1) 3♥ (2)
pass pass dbl pass
pass pass

♠ J42 N ♠ AKQ
♥ J96 W E ♥ 1074
♦ 97652 S ♦ AQJ4
♣ J9 ♣ A107
♠ 73
♥ AKQ532
♦ K
♣ KQ85

Table B

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

Table A: (1) 2NT is 20-22 (or 20-21, depending upon partnership agreement). This hand is 20 but has totally flat shape; but the two 10's are a + factor and so it's just about worth 2NT.
(2) What did you bid with Hand B at (2) in this week's quiz? This is not something that you find in the bidding books – you have to think. RHO has 20-22 points; you have 17 points; LHO and partner have at most 3 between them. If you double then either the opponents will find a (♦) fit or you will end up in a doubled contract. If you bid 3♥ then RHO will obviously double you and you will go down. If you pass then so will LHO and partner – excellent.

Table B: (2) This South had his thinking cap on.

And what happened? Just two South's found the pass at (2). 2NT was down 3 at both tables for 300 to N-S and a joint top. At the other 3 tables the contract was 3♥ by South. That was 100 away and 500 away at the two tables where it was doubled.

The bottom lines: -

- When RHO opens 2NT it is rarely correct to double with a big hand.
- Indeed, some players play that double shows a distributional two-suiter.
- If you think that 2NT is going down, then pass. If you double then 2NT will not be the final contract.

Now this situation - a huge hand when RHO opens 2NT - comes up once in a blue moon. But we had a total blue moon at the club a few years back (News sheet 6). Remember?

West	East	West	North	East (me)	South
♠ AK72	♠ 9864	-	-	-	2NT
♥ KQ2	♥ 98754	dbl (1)	pass	pass	3♦
♦ Q4	♦ 763	dbl (2)	pass	pass (3)	pass
♣ KQJ7	♣ 6				

West chose to double at (1). Showing 20 pts, I'm not arguing although pass may be better. South removed to 3♦, so what do you do at (2)? You must pass. You have told partner about your 20 points and pass now means that you do not have good enough ♦'s for a penalty double. I was East and passed at (3). My partner said that his double was take-out. Wrong.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: (a) 2♥. This is forcing and is better than supporting ♠'s (say 3♠ or 4♠) as there may be a ♠ loser in a ♠ contract which is not there in a ♥ contract. The intermediates in this suit make all the difference.
(b) Pass or 4♥? Hans says pass, I say 4♥. Take your pick.
- Hand B: Pass. You expect to defeat 2NT. If you double then somebody will bid. If you bid 3♥ then you will go down, probably doubled.
- Hand C: (a) Pass or double. Double is not too bad this time as if partner bids you hope to have a fit; but I still prefer pass.
(b) But this time you must pass. Your last double told partner that the points are 20-20. If you pass then partner will bid a major with his zero count....
(c) ... but double here is penalties. Showing the same 20 points you showed last time but promising something decent in ♦'s.
- Hand D: 3♣. A 6 card ♣ suit like this is OK non-vul according to Marty Bergen. That's good enough for me.
- Hand E: 3♣, Stayman. With a weak doubleton look for the 4-4 ♥ fit. Swap the ♠9 and ♥K and I would bid 3NT.
- Hand F: (a) Pass. Apply the rule of 16 (long suit + ♠ length) in 4th seat. This does not qualify (it is 14).
(b) Pass. There is no game. You do not want to raise ♠'s with just two trumps (the Law – the total is eight) and you will be happy to defend if the opponents compete to the three level.
- Hand G: 2♠. A top-of-the-range weak two.
- Hand H: 3NT. Partner has shown a good hand with a 6 card ♣ suit. Nine tricks in NT could easily be there. You have a ♥ stop and so it's best if you are declarer.



Club News Sheet – No. 96

3/9/2004



Monday 30/8/2004

Friday 3/9/2004

1st Dave/Tonni 63 %
 2nd Jean-Marc/Terry 62 %

1st Dave/Bob 59%
 2nd = Jan/Tonni 58%
 2nd = Richard/Terry 58%

Bidding Quiz

Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.

Hand A Hand B
 ♠ KQ10 ♠ Q10643
 ♥ AQ8542 ♥ 3
 ♦ A ♦ A42
 ♣ A75 ♣ K1075

With Hand A partner opens 1♦, (a) what do you bid?
 Suppose you choose 1♥ and partner rebids 1♠, then
 (b) what do you bid now – so it's 1♦ - 1♥ - 1♠ - ?

With Hand B partner opens 1NT, you bid 2♥ and he bids 2♠.
 What do you do now?

Hand C Hand D
 ♠ 109762 ♠ AK8
 ♥ QJ92 ♥ J4
 ♦ J ♦ K9853
 ♣ 1052 ♣ A93

With Hand C partner opens 1♦, do you bid (what?) or pass?

What do you open with Hand D?

Hand E Hand F
 ♠ J73 ♠ AKJ4
 ♥ AK8 ♥ A1084
 ♦ 432 ♦ AKQ5
 ♣ Q1092 ♣ 4

With Hand E partner opens 1♣, what do you bid?

What do you open with Hand F?

Hand G Hand H
 ♠ 72 ♠ K92
 ♥ AKJ942 ♥ AQ8643
 ♦ - ♦ 85
 ♣ Q7542 ♣ A8

With Hand G RHO opens 1♠, what do you bid?

With Hand H partner opens 1♥(!). What do you bid?

Hand J Hand K
 ♠ Q ♠ 95
 ♥ KJ97 ♥ AKJ4
 ♦ KQ852 ♦ Q9854
 ♣ J82 ♣ QJ

With Hand J partner opens 1♦ and RHO bids 2♠, what do you do?

And much the same again. With Hand K partner opens 1♦ and RHO bids 2♠, what do you do?

How many points?

Partner opens 1♦, RHO overcalls 1♠ and you make a negative double, so: - 1♦ - 1♠ - dbl?
 You play negative doubles, so (a) how many points does dbl here show?
 And (b) how many points if the overcall had been 2♠, so: - 1♦ - 2♠ - dbl?

How do you make a non-forcing bid forcing?

Board 4 from Friday 27th, both vul

North	South (A)	West	North	East	South
♠ A973	♠ KQ10	pass	1♦	pass	1♥ (1)
♥ 63	♥ AQ8542	pass	1♠	pass	2♣ (2)
♦ KQ97	♦ A	pass	2♦ (3)	pass	2♥ (4)
♣ KQ9	♣ A75	pass	2NT (5)	pass	4NT (6)
		pass	6NT (7)	all pass	

South had a problem in that he wanted to show his good ♥'s but his bids had to be forcing.
Let's see how to solve the problem: -

- (1) What did you bid with Hand A in this week's quiz? A 2♥ jump shift is very reasonable and will solve any future problems as it is game forcing. But I don't like it too much as the jump shift strongly suggests that suit as trumps when a major and this suit is a bit moth-eaten. So this South chose 1♥ with which I agree.
- (2) But now he has a problem. If you are not familiar with 4th suit forcing there is no sensible bid. 2♥ is weakish; 3♥ is stronger but not forcing; 4♥ may work out, but partner may be void or you may easily miss a slam. 4♥ simply takes up far too much bidding space. The solution? You must bid the 4th suit. A subsequent ♥ bid is then forcing.
- (3) Quite why this West did not bid 2NT here baffles me (but it worked out quite well).
- (4) This 2♥ bid is now forcing (some say game forcing). See how much bidding space is saved by using the 4th suit, no need to leap around.
- (5) I prefer to play sequences like this after the 4th suit as game forcing, so 2NT here is forcing.
- (6) There is no ♥ fit. With 3 ♥'s or ♥Kx North would have supported ♥'s last go. So should South go for slam or not? 4♣ would be asking for aces but even with 19 points opposite an opener it's not enough to leap into slam with no fit. South could just bid 3NT here, but an invitational 4NT seems about right to me.
- (7) North has not shown any extras in the auction and so 14 points is enough to accept the slam invitation.

And what happened? The ♥K was offside and so the slam went down. At the two other tables the contracts were 6♥ and 6NT, both down.

It's marginal if you should bid slam here, but 6NT is much better than 6♥ at pairs. If 6♥ makes, then so does 6NT and it scores more (at pairs). And there are situations where 6NT makes but 6♥ does not. Give East a singleton ♥K and the ♠'s splitting 3-3 then 6NT makes but you lose two trumps in 6♥.

The bottom lines: -

- Understand 4th suit forcing.
- You can make your bid forcing by bidding the 4th suit first.
- It's up to your partnership agreement if the auction is game forcing or not after the 4th suit. Sophisticated partnerships have some sequences forcing to game and others not.
- I think it's easiest to say it's game forcing after the 4th suit.
- I recommend that a jump shift should be a really decent suit. This ♥ suit is not good enough in my style.
- Even 33 points may not be enough for slam with no fit.

Transfer and bid a new suit?

Board 9 from Monday 30th, E-W vul

North (D)	South (B)	<u>Table A</u>			
		West	North	East	South
♠ AK8	♠ Q10643	-	1NT (1)	pass	2♥
♥ J4	♥ 3	pass	2♠	pass	4♠ (2)
♦ K9853	♦ A42	pass	pass	pass	
♣ A93	♣ K1075				

(My) Recommended Bidding

West	North	East	South	<u>Table B</u>			
				West	North	East	South
-	1NT (1)	pass	2♥	-	1NT (1)	pass	2♥
pass	2♠	pass	3♣ (2)	pass	2♠	pass	pass (2)
pass	4♠ (3)	all pass					

This hand was played 5 times on Monday and the easy game reached only twice: -

Table A: (1) So what did you open with Hand D in this week's quiz? It really makes life easy if you open 1NT with these 15-17 semi-balanced hands as then you never have a rebid problem. South obviously transfers, but what did you then bid with Hand B at (2) in this week's quiz? 4♠ is reasonable but I prefer to have a 6 card suit for the bid.

Table B: This South chose to pass at (2). Now I can't really understand this (it happened at two tables); when partner opens 1NT and you have 8-9 points then that is an invitational hand. With a 5 card major as in this case you obviously transfer but when partner completes the transfer you have to make an invitational bid. The only invitational bids are 2NT or 3 of the major (3♣ is forcing). If you consider this hand only worth an invitation then it's a toss-up between 3♠ (promising 6 ♠'s) or 2NT.

'Expert' Table? But I would not consider this South hand invitational. It's only 9 points but the two 10's, the shape, and the fact that all the points are in long suits are enough to make this hand game forcing in my opinion. So what do you bid at (2)? Actually it's simple with game values – you simply bid out your shape, so 3♣. A new suit here is game forcing and unlimited (could be looking for slam). North now has a decision to make at (3). Obviously he wants to play in ♠'s and 3♠ (still game forcing) would be stronger than 4♠. The hand has excellent ♠'s but is minimum and so 4♠ is fine. 4♠ would be reached here either way.

And what happened? The board was played 5 times on Monday but only two pairs reached 4♠. And since South was declarer in ♠ contracts twice, I guess two North's did not open 1NT?

The bottom lines: -

- With a balanced hand within your 1NT range (15-17), open 1NT.
- With 8-9 points opposite partner's 1NT, invite.
- With this 8-9 points and a 5 card major, transfer first and then invite (2NT or 3 of the major).
- Upgrade with 10's, shape etc.
- After you transfer, a new suit by responder is natural and game forcing.

Pass partner's 1♦ opening?

Board 15 from Monday 30th, E-W vul

West (F)	East (C)	<u>Table A</u>			
		West	North	East	South
♠ AKJ4	♠ 109762	-	-	-	pass
♥ A1084	♥ QJ92	1♦ (1)	pass	pass (2)	pass
♦ AKQ5	♦ J				
♣ 4	♣ 1052	<u>Table B</u>			
		West	North	East	South
		-	-	-	pass
		1♦ (1)	pass	1♥ (2)	pass
		4♥ (3)	pass	pass	pass

Table A: So what did you open with Hand F at (1) in this week's quiz? It's a great hand but not worth a 2♣ opening. So 2NT? One is allowed to open 2NT (unlike 1NT) with a singleton but I would only do so (reluctantly) with a singleton ace or king. So 2NT is out with this hand – that only leaves 1♦. Fine.

(2) but it's not so fine if partner passes! I would never pass with this hand. People who say 'it's only 4 points' simply have to look at what happened here.

Table B: I don't know the bidding at any table but Table A (I was North) but I note that Nick/Bob were the only pair to end up in a ♥ contract by East and so I assume that this was their bidding. I, too, would respond 1♥ at (2). Normally one bids 1♠ with this hand type but this hand is so weak that it only wants to make one bid, and if you bid 1♠ then you may miss a ♥ fit. I would bid 1♥ and pass virtually any bid from partner.

(3) 4♥ is the value bid here, showing about 18-21 points. If you play splinters then it's obviously 4♣ (and pass partner's hasty retreat into 4♥).

What happened? 1♦ was not a success. One pair found 3NT!!!, but scored a 2nd top when the opponents failed to find the ♣ lead. The other 3 tables were in 4 or 5 ♥'s making 11 or 12 tricks.

The bottom lines: -

- Be very wary of passing partner's 1♣ or 1♦ opening with a singleton in the suit.
- You can stretch with 4 points, especially if you have both majors.

♠ Q762 And don't forget splinters.
♥ KQJ9 It did not feature in this board, but change the East hand to this and 6♥ is an
♦ J8 excellent contract. How would you reach it? Via a 4♣ splinter by West.
♣ 1052

A grand slam on a repeating squeeze!

Board 10 from Monday 30th

Dealer:	♠ K92	West	North (H)	East	South
East	♥ AQ8643	-	-	pass	1♥
both vul	♦ 85	pass	1♠ (1)	pass	3♥
	♣ A8	pass	4NT (2)	pass	5♣
♠ Q104	N	♠ J7653	pass	5NT (3)	pass
♥ 2	W E	♥ -	pass	pass	pass
♦ KJ63	S	♦ Q9742			7♥ (4)
♣ QJ1095		♣ 764			
	♠ A8				
	♥ KJ10975				
	♦ A10				
	♣ K32				

An interesting auction, let's have a look: -

First of all, what did you bid with Hand H at (1) in this week's quiz? It's not often that you have a good hand with 6 card support for partner's opening major! If you do not play conventions such a Jacoby 2NT (we had not agreed this) then you have to improvise. Obviously 2♥ and 3♥ are out (non-forcing) and 4♥ is best played as a weak bid. So you cannot support directly. North could simply bid Blackwood but I (as always) prefer to take it slowly and maybe learn something about partner's hand. So I chose 1♠ at (although, in retrospect, 2♣ is probably better). This slow approach worked fine as South showed a powerful hand with his 3♥ jump rebid. 4NT at (2) was RKCB and 5♣ was 3 key cards. 5NT asked for kings but my partner apparently does not have my preference to take it slowly (I am getting on you know) and leapt to 7♥. Fine if you make it!

DUMMY	♠ K92	West led the ♣Q. Declarer won with the ♣A and
→	♥ 3	cashd 5 rounds of ♥'s. That left this position.
	♦ 85	On the ♥5 West now had to find a discard. Not
	♣ 8	easy if you have no signalling understanding
♠ Q104	N	with partner.
♥	W E	Anyway, West discarded the ♣J and then the
♦ KJ	S	♣ K and then the ♣3 squeezed both West and
♣ QJ		East again (North retained his ♠K92).
	♠ A8	Anyway, both West and East had better ♦'s than
	♥ 5	♠'s and so both discarded ♠'s and the ♠2 made
	♦ A10	the 13 th trick.
	♣ K3	

And what happened? 6♥ (making exactly) was the contract at every other table.

6♥ is easy (ruff a ♠ in the South hand). 7♥ is a lot trickier! Note that the ♣3 and the ♠2 both made a trick!

The bottom lines: - Watch partner's discards (especially in a grand slam!) so that you don't both keep the same suit.

Who wants to play in 5♦? – part 1Board 15 from Monday 30th, E-W vul

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ 1098	♠ AKQJ	pass	pass	1♦	pass
♥ K975	♥ J	1♥	pass	2♠ (1)	pass
♦ K432	♦ AJ9876	3NT (2)	all pass		
♣ KJ	♣ 75				

East's jump to 2♠ at (1) is a bit of an overbid, but then West has an easy 2NT or 3NT (at least I think it's easy) at (2).

And what happened? 3NT made +2 at all 3 tables where it was bid. But, despite my continual writings, we still had one pair in 5♦ (making the same number of tricks).

The bottom line: - If 3NT is a sensible option, it is usually better than 5♦.

Who wants to play in 5♦? – part 2Board 13 from Monday 30th

Dealer:	♠ K	West	North	East	South (J)
North	♥ Q643		(me)		
both vul	♦ AJ1094				
	♣ AKQ	-	1♦	2♠ (1)	dbl (2)
		pass	4♥ (3)	pass	pass
♠ J1095	N	♠ A876432			
♥ A82	W E	♥ 102			
♦ 763	S	♦ -			
♣ 1075		♣ 9643			
	♠ Q				
	♥ KJ97				
	♦ KQ852				
	♣ J82				

An instructive sequence: -

East's 2♠ overcall at (1) is weak (a weak jump overcall). This is usually a six card suit but this hand is not good enough for 3♠ when vulnerable and I agree with 2♠.

What did you bid with Hand J at (2) in this week's quiz? A singleton in RHO's suit and superb ♦ support, so 5♦? That is, apparently what 4 out of the 5 players did on Monday. I disagree, but no problem as my partner got it right, a negative double. This promises 4♥'s and values to at least compete to 3♥.

But North cannot get lazy at (3); a 3♥ bid here would be non-forcing. With a game going hand opposite partner's 4♥'s and 10 or 11+ points North has to bid game.

And what happened? 4♥ suffered a ♦ ruff and made just 10 tricks. 5♦ was bid at *every* other table. It made 11 tricks but they shared the bottom – deservedly so.

The bottom lines: -

- play negative doubles
- A negative double only promises the unbid major and values to compete.
- 5-5 fits are nice, but 4-4 major suit fits score more.
- don't bid 5♦ if 4♥ is a sensible option!

Who wants to play in 5♦? – part 3

Board 18 from Friday 3rd

It's a similar start to the auction this time: -

Dealer:	♠ J4	<u>Table A</u>			
East	♥ Q10652	West (K)	North	East	South
N-S vul	♦ K107	-	-	1♦	2♠ (1)
	♣ 1074	3♥ (2)	pass	4♥ (3)	all pass

♠ 95	N	♠ A32	<u>(My) Recommended Bidding</u>			
♥ AKJ4	W E	♥ 987	West (K)	North	East	South
♦ Q9854	S	♦ AJ32	-	-	1♦	2♠ (1)
♣ QJ		♣ A53	dbl (2)	pass	2NT (3)	pass
	♠ KQ10876		3NT (4)	all pass		
	♥ 3					
	♦ 6					
	♣ K9862					

Table A: (1) 2♠ here is a weak jump overcall. Many would consider it a bit too strong and so simply overcall 1♠. But N-S were vulnerable and I guess that it does not hurt to have a bit in reserve occasionally?
(2) But what did you bid at (2) with Hand K in this week's quiz? It's the same problem as the previous page, you have to make a negative double. This 3♥ bid is wrong because it promises 5♥'s.
(3) Opposite a 5 card suit I would also bid 4♥ with this hand because all the other suits have only one stop for NT and a 3NT contract would be 'wrong-sided'.
'Expert' (2) a negative double, showing 4♥'s (and unlimited values). Knowing that West
Table? has only 4♥'s East makes his natural rebid of NT at (3). Note that this still shows 12-14 points, it is partner (West) who has forced you to bid at a higher level and the cheapest NT bid is still 12-14. West has excellent ♦ support but you know me – if 3NT is a sensible option, then bid it rather than a minor suit game.

And what happened? 4♥ was three down. At another table E-W managed to reach 5♥! That was doubled and went minus two for -300. And at the 3rd table 2♠ was doubled minus one. 3NT may not make (I guess it's one off as South has the ♣K and North the ♥Q) but I think that it's a very sensible contract with the E-W cards, it's certainly better than a ♥ game.

The bottom lines. –

Negative doubles

- I keep harping on about negative doubles, but it really is the only way to show a 4 card ♥ suit when RHO overcalls in ♠'s.
- Remember that a negative double only promises 4 cards in the unbid major.
- A negative double is unlimited in strength. The minimum is values to compete in the major at the lowest level; there is no maximum strength for a negative double.

Who wants to play in 5♦? – part 4Board 11 from Monday 30th

There are, of course, always (very few) exceptions when 5♣/♦ is best: -

Dealer:	♠ -	West	North	East	South
South	♥ 10986542		(me)		
Love all	♦ K8				
	♣ KQ63	-	-	-	1♦
		pass	1♥	pass	2♠ (1)
♠ J10743	N	pass	3♥	pass	3♠ (2)
♥ KJ7	W E	pass	5♦ (3)	all pass	
♦ 74	S				
♣ 987					
	♠ AKQ95				
	♥ -				
	♦ AQJ1063				
	♣ 102				
	♠ 862				
	♥ AQ3				
	♦ 952				
	♣ AJ54				

Another instructive sequence: -

South's 2♠ at (1) is game forcing, 3♠ at (2) promises 5♠'s and thus at least 6♦'s (the 1♦ opening promises more♦'s than♠'s). North has a mis-fit but the auction is game forcing and 5♦ looks like the best game, so North bid it – fast arrival (4♦ would show slam interest – slow arrival)

And what happened? 5♦ was a good spot making +1 and scored a joint 2nd. But it was beaten by the pair who bid 3NT! (and made +3). One table was in a silly 4♠ (doubled, minus 4 – I have no idea how the bidding went, but surely North should pull this to 5♦? On a good day that will be doubled too for an outright top). The last table played in 3♥ going one down.

The bottom lines: -

- Only with strange distributional hands is 5♦ better than 3NT.
- And even then you may luck out with mis-defence and score a top for 3NT!

Bid 1NT or raise partner's minor?Board 20 from Friday 3rd, both vul

North	South (E)	<u>Table A</u>			
		West	North	East	South
♠ AK104	♠ J73	pass	1♣	pass	2♣
♥ J953	♥ AK8				all pass
♦ 96	♦ 432	<u>Tables B&C</u>			
♣ AJ6	♣ Q1092	pass	1♣	pass	1NT (1) all pass

(1) 1NT is 6-9 (poor 10). Some players (Jean-Marc is one) play that 1NT over a 1♣ opening is 8-10, very sound. Either way, this hand is totally flat and 1NT is the best bid.

And what happened? Obviously South at Tables B&C got it right. 2♣ made +1 but 1NT was +2 at both the other tables. The bottom lines:-

You should only support partner's opening minor suit with 5+ card support. This is because (a) A NT contract scores more, and (b) opener may have only a 3 card suit.

Big hand bidding

Board 13 from Friday 3rd, both vul

All three table got into a mess with this board on Friday. Obviously you want to be in 4♥ and nobody managed it. I only know the bidding at Table A: -

West	East	<u>Table A</u>			
		West	North	East	South
♠ 864	♠ A109	-	pass	2♦ (1)	pass
♥ 106	♥ AQJ72	2NT (2)	pass	3♥ (3)	pass
♦ J75432	♦ A	pass (4)			
♣ 103	♣ AKQ4				

2♦ at (1) was this pair's strongest bid. Other than that, I don't think that they had discussed anything. The meaning of 2NT at (2) was unclear. 3♥ at (3) was game forcing but presumably West did not realise this.

And what happened? 4♥ is obviously where you want to be 99% of the time. This was the other 1% and E-W lucked out when there was a 5-1 ♥ break and so only 9 tricks. And at other tables? I don't know the bidding but it was obviously equally bad as they both reached impossible slams (6♥ doubled minus 4 and 6NT minus 3). Of course my partner and I got a fat zero on this board as the pair who bid it against us were the ones who lucked out in 3♥.

The bottom lines. Obviously I have to say something about bidding after a 2♣ (or Benjamin 2♦) opener: -

(My) Recommended Bidding

Playing Standard American

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

Playing Benjamin twos

West	North	East	South
-	pass	2♦ (a)	pass
2♥ (b)	pass	3♥ (c)	pass
4♥ (d)	all pass		

- (1) Playing Standard American 2♣ is the strongest bid and the only sequence that is not game forcing is 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT where responder may pass or transfer and pass.
- (2) negative (about 0-8).
- (3) game forcing
- (4) 2nd negative (about 0-3).
- (5) 2nd suit, still game forcing
- (6) fast arrival. Let's get this over with quickly.

I featured Benjamin twos last week and this is my recommendation: -

- (a) This is the big bid and is always 100% game forcing playing Benjamin twos.
- (b) waiting. This actual opening hand is really the only drawback of playing Benjamin twos – if opener has a big hand with a ♥ suit then a round of bidding is lost and the wrong hand will end up being declarer in an eventual ♥ contract.
- (c) still game forcing
- (d) OK.

Note that in the Benjamin sequence there was no room for opener to show his ♣ suit. Playing Benjamin I prefer to say that responder *must always* bid 2♥ at (b).

Obey the LAW

Board from Monday 30th

Dealer:	♠ J10975	West	North	East	South
East	♥ AJ87				
E-W vul	♦ 87	-	-	1♦	pass
	♣ A9	1♥	1♠	2♣	2♠ (1)
		pass	pass	3♣ (2)	pass
♠ KQ62	N	♠ A	pass (3)	3♠ (3)	4♣ (4) pass
♥ KQ654	W E	♥ 2	pass	pass	
♦ 2	S	♦ A109653			
♣ 752		♣ K8643			
	♠ 843				
	♥ 1093				
	♦ KQJ4				
	♣ QJ10				

A top converted into a bottom, let's see how the LAW should have been applied: -

- (1) This is fine, partner's overcall promises 5 ♠'s and so South can support with 3 ♠'s.
- (2) And this is also fine, promising a good hand with 5-5 or 6-5 in the minors.
- (3) And this is also fine, it promises nothing other than more ♣'s than ♦'s (could be a singleton ♣ and void ♦ on a bad day).
- (4) But this is silly. This is an excellent defensive hand, the points are not in the suit, partner has only promised 3 ♠'s, ... there is absolutely no reason to go above the level of the LAW with this hand.....
- (5) ... unless the opposition do not know about the LAW either! This bid is even more silly for the same reasons! It has defensive values (3 tricks). Partner (West) has promised no more than two ♣'s, that's a total of 7 trumps – the one level is safe, the four level is not!!

And what happened? If 3♠ had been passed around to West then that would have been doubled and gone for -500, 4♣ was minus one and got a poor score. There was also a silly result at another table when West went for 800 in 3NT doubled. The other 3 tables played in sensible partscores (3♣ making by East or 2♠ by North minus two).

The bottom lines: -

- Obey the LAW
- Once you have said your hand, that's it.
- Bail out ASAP with mis-fits (West should pass 3♣ and not bid 3NT).

In the above deal both North and East had stated their trump length and had nothing more to say. If anybody wanted to go above the level of the LAW it should have been South or West (and they most certainly did not want to).

Double and bid again?

Board 19 from Friday 3rd, E-W vul

West (G)	East	<u>Table A</u>			
		West	North	East	South
♠ 72	♠ KQ93	-	-	-	1♠
♥ AKJ942	♥ 65	dbl (1)	1NT	2♦ (2)	pass
♦ -	♦ K7642	2♥ (3)	pass	4♥ (4)	all pass
♣ Q7542	♣ 108				

<u>Table B</u>			
West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
dbl (1)	1NT	pass (2)	pass
2♥ (3)	pass	2NT (5)	pass
3♣	pass	3NT	dbl
pass	pass	pass	

Table A: So what did you bid at (1) with Hand G in this week's quiz? I don't like double – what are you going to do when partner bids 2♦? ...

(2) ... Partner bids 2♦! Now normally when partner doubles then a non-jump is 0-9 points. When RHO has bid then you don't have to, so this is a free bid and shows about 8-9 points.

(3) An initial double followed by a new suit shows a BIG hand. In this case, one that was too strong to simply overcall 2♥. This hand is not. It should have overcalled 2♥ at (1) – this shows opening values at the two level – and subsequently bid 3♣ if possible.

(4) Partner has shown a very strong hand (about 17+ including shape) and 4♥ is fine (if you believe partner).

Table B: We again have the overbid of a double at (1) and this time East chose to pass. 2♥ at (3) again shows a very good hand. Now this East also knew that his partner should have a very good hand and bid 2NT; I would prefer a forcing bid (say 2♠). Anyway, West bid 3♣ and East had an easy 3NT bid. Mind you, there does appear to be about 50 points in this pack and the double cannot have come as a surprise; somebody does not have the values for their bid(s) and it's probably West.

And what happened? Obviously both tables got too high, and it was not East's fault. 4♥ was two down. But somehow 3NT made (how?) for a clear top.

The bottom lines: -

- If you double and then bid a new suit over partner's response then this shows a hand that is too strong for a simple overcall.
- Since a simple overcall is about 7-17 points (11-17 at the two level) then such a sequence is the equivalent of 18+ points.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: (a) 1♥ or 2♥? Either is quite reasonable. I would choose 1♥ as I would like the suit to be a little sturdier for the jump shift.
(b) 2♣. The 4th suit. You would like to bid ♥'s but you cannot: 2♥ and 3♥ are both non-forcing and 4♥ is a bit unilateral, taking up loads of bidding space. The answer is to bid the 4th suit and then a ♥ bid next go is forcing.
- Hand B: 3♣. You have values for game and I don't really like to bid 4♠ with just 5 ♠'s. 3♣ is game forcing and promises 5 ♠'s and 4 ♣'s. Perfect, leave it up to partner.
- Hand C: 1♥. You will never get agreement on this issue. I am not sadistic enough to leave partner floundering in 1♦ in a possible 3-1 fit. This is a weak hand and so cannot make two bids and so I would bid 1♥ and pass whatever comes next.
- Hand D: 1NT. If you open 1♦ then what is your rebid over 1♥? This motley ♦ suit again?
- Hand E: 1NT. A flat 10 count so that's all it's worth. You should not support partner (with 2♣ here) with only 4 card support, partner may have only 3 ♣'s.
- Hand F: 1♦. It's 21 points but 2NT with a singleton ♣4 is unwise and the hand is not worth a game forcing 2♣.
- Hand G: 2♥. This hand is not strong enough to double and then bid ♥'s over partner's expected 2♦ response. A 2♥ overcall is about 11-17 points, so overcall 2♥ and bid ♣'s later if you get the chance.
- Hand H: 2♣ or 1♠. You cannot support ♥'s directly now unless you play something like Jacoby 2NT. 2♥ and 3♥ are non-forcing and the hand is far too good for 4♥. You could jump straight into your ace-ask bid but I, as always, prefer to take it slowly. So you have to 'manufacture' a forcing bid. I chose 1♠ at the table but in retrospect I think that 2♣ may be better as it is lower ranking (you do not want to end up in 6♠).
- Hand J: Double. This is a negative double simply promising 4 ♥'s. It is unlimited. If partner bid ♥'s you raise to 4♥ and if partner doesn't bid ♥'s then you have ♦'s in reserve.
- Hand K: Double. ditto.

How many points?

How many points does your dbl show here?

- (a) 1♦ - 1♠ - dbl? Six points with no upper limit. Exactly the same as if RHO had passed and you had bid 1♥. The bid guarantees 4 ♥'s and most players these days say that is says nothing about ♣'s.
- (b) 1♦ - 2♠ - dbl? Ten-eleven points with no upper limit. This time partner would have to bid ♥'s at the 3 level with a minimum hand and so you need a decent 10.



Club News Sheet – No. 97

10/9/2004



Monday 6/9/2004

Friday 10/9/2004

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

1 st Dave/Bob	55%
2 nd 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 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. 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.

Who wants to play in a minor (instead of 3NT)?Board 1 from Monday 6th, love all

North (C)	South	<u>Table A</u>			
		West	North	East	South
♠ AJ42	♠ 3	-	pass (1)	pass	1♣ (2)
♥ J4	♥ K109	pass	1♠ (3)	pass	2♣ (4)
♦ Q10975	♦ KJ4	pass	2♦ (5)	pass	pass
♣ K3	♣ A109872	pass			

(My) Recommended Bidding

West	North	East	South	<u>Table B</u>	West	North	East	South
-	pass (1)	pass	1♣ (2)	-	pass (1)	pass	pass	1♣ (2)
pass	1♦ (3)	pass	2♣ (4)	pass	1♠ (3)	pass	pass	2♣ (4)
pass	2♠ (5)	pass	3NT (6)	pass	2♦ (5)	pass	pass	3♣ (6)
pass	pass	pass		pass	pass	pass	pass	

This hand was played 5 times on Monday and 3NT reached only once: -

Table A: (1) North chooses to pass. I'm not arguing – it conforms to the rule of 20 but many players would prefer to pass. Fine.

(2) With these intermediates, a sound opener in any seat.

(3) But should North respond 1♦ or 1♠? I normally 'bid up the line' unless the hand is so weak that it can make only one bid. Anyway, this hand has a 5 card ♦ suit and is strong enough to bid twice and so I would bid 1♦.

(4) I prefer 2♣ here to an off-beat 1NT.

(5) This is normally forcing, but I guess it's not by a passed hand.

Table B: The same up to (5), quite reasonable. And 2NT at (5) is also very reasonable (especially if partner can pass 2♦). But what should South do at (6)? I guess nearly everybody said 'only 11 points, so 3♣ or pass'? NO, this hand is worth far more than 11 points – just look at that ♣ suit and all of the intermediates. This hand should bid 3NT at (6). I don't like 2NT at (6) because North has already made an effort and will probably pass.

'Expert' I'm not arguing with 1♠ at (3), but I prefer 1♦ and then 2♠ at (5) – bid out the Table? shape. South has the same decision at (6) and I think that 3NT is clear.

And what happened? 3♦ once, 2♣ once, 3♣ twice and just one solitary 3NT making exactly.

The bottom lines: -

- Bid a 5 card suit before a 4 card suit.
- A decent 6 card suit is a big plus.
- 10987 with a 6 card suit are a big plus.
- 11 points opposite an opener is worth two bids – so bid up the line. I note that there was a 2♣ contract, did somebody actually pass at (5)?

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.

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	<u>Table B</u>			
♥ Q52	W E	♥ AJ976	West	North	East	South
♦ 42	S	♦ J63	-	-	-	pass
♣ J1086		♣ KQ7	pass	1♦ (1)	1♥	1♠
	♠ Q9842		2♥ (2)	pass	pass	pass
	♥ K4		<u>Table C</u>			
	♦ 1075		West	North(me)	East	South
	♣ 953		-	-	-	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.



Monday 13/9/2004

Friday 17/9/2004

1st Bob/Eddie 59%
2nd Jan/Jon 57%

1st Phil/Eddie 63%
2nd Frode/Tomas 58%

Funny how it goes sometimes. I played 18 boards on Monday and could not find a single one interesting enough to write up. On Friday I played just 14 boards but wrote up ten of them. Could it be that the return of Jeff/Alex has livened up the club?

Bidding Quiz

Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.

Hand A Hand B With Hand A LHO opens 1♦ and RHO bids 1♥, what do you do?

♠ KQJ ♠ A32
♥ K106 ♥ KQ3
♦ K872 ♦ Q973
♣ A104 ♣ A92

What do you open with Hand B?

Hand C Hand D With Hand C partner opens 1♣, what do you bid?

♠ A3 ♠ A432
♥ K10 ♥ Q875
♦ AQ107 ♦ A6
♣ KQ632 ♣ J52

With Hand D partner opens 1♦ and you bid 1♥. Partner then bids 1NT (12-14). What do you bid?

Hand E Hand F With Hand E you open 1♠ and partner raises to 4♠. What do you do now?

♠ KQJ1063 ♠ 2
♥ Q42 ♥ K97
♦ AK6 ♦ A987654
♣ 6 ♣ 97

With Hand F it's favourable vulnerability. You open 3♦, LHO doubles, partner bids 4♦ and RHO bid 4♥ What do you do? So it's 3♦ - dbl - 4♦ - 4♥ - ?

Hand G Hand H With Hand G LHO opens 1♠ and partner overcalls 2♥. What do you bid?

♠ KQ75 ♠ A8
♥ AKJ43 ♥ Q10985
♦ 2 ♦ Q76
♣ 1082 ♣ K53

With Hand H RHO, you and LHO all pass and partner opens 1♥ in 4th seat. RHO then overcalls 1♠, what do you bid?

Hand J Hand K With Hand J RHO opens 1♦, what do you bid?

♠ KQ1097643 ♠ A972
♥ K4 ♥ 76
♦ - ♦ AKQ7
♣ Q95 ♣ K108

With Hand K partner opens 3♣, what do you bid?

Finding the 5-3 fit

Board 16 from Monday 6th, E-W vul

North	South	<u>Table A</u>			
		West	North	East	South
♠ AK10	♠ QJ7	pass	1♣ (1)	pass	1♥
♥ 432	♥ Q9876	pass	1NT	pass	2♣ (2)
♦ A6	♦ 5	pass	pass	pass	
♣ K9432	♣ AQ106				

Table A: (1) North chooses to open 1♣, fine. This hand is a good 14 count and with the 5 card suit I would not argue with a 1NT opener.
(2) If this was natural it is feeble. South knows of the ♣ fit and there will be game if North has 3♥'s, but how do you find out? Be patient, all will be revealed.

The board was played 5 times on Monday 6th but only one pair found 4♥. So how should it be bid?

(My) Recommended Bidding - 1

West	North	East	South
pass	1NT	pass	2♦
pass	2♥	pass	3♣ (1)
pass	4♥ (2)	pass	pass
pass			

(My) Recommended Bidding - 2

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

Recommended Bidding – 1 Of course it's easy if North elects to open 1NT. After the transfer South's 3♣ at (1) is natural and game forcing. North then has an easy 4♥ bid. But most people would not open 1NT and so let's see how the 5-3♥ fit is located: -

Recommended Bidding – 2 **Checkback Stayman, or New Minor Forcing.**

Now South wants to play in 4♥ if there is a fit. 2♥ at (4) would be weak and 3♥ is played as either a 6 card suit or invitational by many players. Playing Checkback Stayman a 2♣ bid at (4) is totally artificial (similar to 2♣ Stayman after a 1NT opening) and is at least invitational to game in strength. It asks North about his hand, especially his major suit holdings. The replies are: -

2♦	=	minimum, not 3♥'s and not 4♠'s
2♥	=	3♥'s (maybe also 4♠'s)
2♠	=	4♠'s but not 3♥'s
2NT	=	maximum, not 3♥'s and not 4♠'s

There are numerous variations and this is a simple one. A popular (but I think inferior) alternative is the **New Minor Forcing** convention. It is inferior because when the ask is 2♦ there is one less response. So in this example, South would have to bid 2♦ at (4) when playing NMF and we have similar responses but no strength indication.

The bottom lines: -

- Checkback Stayman or, if you prefer, New Minor Forcing are very useful gadgets to use after partner has opened with a minor suit and rebid 1NT.
- The combined number of trumps is more important than their quality.

Worth a 1NT Overcall?

Board 13 from Friday 17th

Dealer: ♠ 1098
North ♥ AJ4
Both vul ♦ QJ54
♣ KQ9

♠ KQJ N ♠ 765
♥ K106 W E ♥ 932
♦ K872 S ♦ 1093
♣ A104 ♣ 8763
♠ A432
♥ Q875
♦ A6
♣ J52

Table A

West (A)	North	East	South
-	1♦	pass	1♥
1NT (1)	pass	pass	dbl (2)
pass	pass	pass	

Table B

West	North	East	South (D)
-	1♦	pass	1♥
pass (1)	1NT	pass	2NT (3)
pass	pass	pass	

Table C

West	North	East	South (me)
-	1♦	pass	1♥
pass (1)	1NT	pass	pass (3)
pass			

Table A: Did you bid at (1) with Hand A in this week's quiz? There are two very good reasons why you should not overcall 1NT (15-18) here: -

(a) This hand is totally flat and so is not worth 16 points.

(b) Both opponent's have bid, they are both unlimited, and partner has passed. If you make a noise you will probably go for a large penalty, especially vulnerable. West should pass. South's double (penalties) was just what West deserved.

Table B: This time West was sensible and it's all obvious up to (3). But what did you bid with Hand D at (3) in this week's quiz? Partner is 12-14 and 11 points is normally enough to invite with 2NT. But this hand should not! Why? Apart from the fact that it's a miserable collection with no long suit and no intermediates, it is totally mis-fitting! How do you know that? Partner (North) has opened your 2 card suit and his 1NT rebid denies a 4 card major – a total mis-fit, so pass!

Table C: And yes, I do practice what I preach. I was South here. My bidding partner said that he would have bid 2NT with my hand at (3). I hope the above paragraph and the bottom lines below are sufficient to convince him of the error of his ways?

And what happened? N-S scrambled 8 tricks because the ♠'s broke 3-3. And the West in 1NT doubled? Here N-S mis-defended and made only 7 tricks, but 200 is still a top for them.

The bottom lines: -

- Do not overcall 1NT when partner has passed and both opponents have bid – you are asking to go for a huge penalty.
- If partner rebids 1NT showing 12-14, then a reasonable 11 points is enough to invite with 2NT. But take into account intermediates and, most importantly, long suits and (lack of) a fit.
- Hand evaluation is more than simply counting points – deduct for flat shape, deduct for no fit, deduct for poor intermediates. Hand D is nowhere near 11 points on this bidding.

A QuickieBoard 6 from Friday 17th, E-W vul

North (B)

Table A (playing a strong NT)Table B (playing Acol)

♠ A32
♥ KQ3
♦ Q973
♣ A92

North South
1NT

North South
1♦ 1♠
1NT

So does this bidding look OK to you? I hope that regular new-sheet readers will realise that it is not, but it's the way it was bid at two tables on Friday. What did you open with Hand B in this week's quiz? It is totally flat with most of the points outside the only 4 card suit. The hand is not worth a strong 1NT opener (or a 15-16 1NT rebid playing Acol). The above auctions are correct if you reverse them (open 1NT playing Acol and open 1♦ playing Standard American). The bottom line. Knock off a point for totally flat 4333 type shape.

Poor Slam bidding? – part 1Board 17 from Friday 17th, love all

North

South (C)

West

North

East

South (me)

♠ K5 ♠ A3
♥ AJ8 ♥ K10
♦ J85 ♦ AQ107
♣ A10754 ♣ KQ632

- 1♣ pass 1♦ (1)
pass 1NT pass 4♣ (2)
pass 4♦ pass 4NT (3)
pass 5♣ (4) all pass

A shambolic auction to a miserable contract. What went wrong?

What did you bid at (1) with Hand C in this week's quiz? When you have enormous support for opener's suit it is often best to introduce a new suit and find out about his hand. South cannot bid ♣'s at (1) (unless you play inverted minors); 2♣ and 3♣ are both non-forcing. At (2) 4♣ is best played as Gerber after partner's last bid is a natural NT bid. North though that it was a raise in ♣'s. But then quite why he bid 4♦ baffles me, surely if he thought that 4♣ was agreeing ♣'s then a 4♥ cue bid would be in order? South obviously took 4♦ as zero aces. If 4♣ was natural then 4NT at (3) was then obviously ace-asking, so North re-confirmed zero aces with 5♣ at (4)? It's all too much for my ageing brain cells.

And what happened? ♦K was onside and the ♦9 dropped on the second round of ♦'s and so 13 tricks were trivial. 6♣ would have been a good contract and is what South would have bid if he knew North had two aces (or even 1 ace). And other tables? It was played 4 times and the contracts were 3NT twice and 5♣ again.

Amazing! Do people not realise that 16 points and KQxxx in the suit that partner has opened is worth slam? And this South hand is an enormous 16 – bristling with aces and kings, a couple of tens, a 2nd 4 card suit, and 5 card support for partner! Wild horses could not keep me out of a 6♣ slam (but my partner found the only way to do so!). The bottom lines: -

- 28-30 is often enough for a small slam *if you have a fit*.
- Take it slowly. South's 1♦ at (1) should have worked out well as the 1NT rebid not only told South how many points North had, but also that the 1♣ opening was at least 4 cards so therefore a ♣ fit and enough for slam.
- 4♣ after partner's last bid was 1NT or 2NT is best played as ace-asking regardless.
- It takes a BIG noise to convince me that partner's earlier bids were nonsense. 5♣ here was not a big enough noise. Guess I trust partners too much?

Poor Slam bidding? – part 2

Board 16 from Friday 17th, E-W vul

North (E)	South
♠ KQJ1063	♠ 97542
♥ Q42	♥ KJ5
♦ AK6	♦ J
♣ 6	♣ K1073

Table A

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

Table B

West	North	East	South
pass	1♠	pass	4♠ (1)
pass	pass	pass	

Table A: (1) With this sort of hand it's best to raise partner directly to 4♠ (take a slower approach with a strong hand). Now North has a very strong hand, but it is missing 3 aces and is not good enough to press on at (2) opposite partner's weak raise to 4♠. East had all three missing aces and so doubled!

Table B: Perfect.

And what happened? 4♠ was bid and made exactly at 3 tables, 5♠ was one down.

The bottom lines: -

- Raising partner's 1♥/♠ opening directly to 4♥/♠ is a weak bid, usually with 5 trumps.
- You need a very good hand to press on when partner has made such a raise.

Poor Slam bidding? – part 3

Board 3 from Friday 17th, E-W vul

North	South
♠ AKQ6	♠ J8754
♥ K103	♥ A62
♦ K8	♦ AQ5
♣ K1062	♣ A9

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

I did not play this hand and I'm not absolutely sure that this was the bidding at this table, but was certainly similar.

First of all, the opening bid. Do you open 1♠ or 1NT at (1)? I prefer 1NT (no good rebid) but it's matter of style. Anyway, the 1♠ opening should have worked out well as the fit is immediately discovered. There may have been a couple more bids but eventually North bid Blackwood at (2). He knew that all the aces and all the kings and the ♠ Q were present, so what do you bid? 6♠, 6NT or 7♠? With a 5-4 fit, solid trumps and all the aces and kings, 7♠ would normally be there. Perhaps it would have been easier if North had opened 1NT (thus showing 15-17)? Who knows?

And what happened? 6♠ + 1 scored above average as it was equalled at one table but just 3NT was bid at the third.

The bottom line.

- Aces and kings are good cards, Quacks are not. Note that there is not a wasted Quack in the above deal.
- 4-4 fits are good, so are 5-4 fits.

Poor Slam bidding? – part 4

Board 4 from Friday 17th

Dealer: ♠ KQ1097643
West ♥ K4
Both vul ♦ -
♣ Q95

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

♠ A	N	♠ 2
♥ 9653	W E	♥ AQJ7
♦ AKQ103	S	♦ J8654
♣ 1083		♣ AK6
	♠ J85	
	♥ 1082	
	♦ 972	
	♣ J742	

I only know the bidding at this table, but with 6♦/♥ making and 7♦/♥ being there if it were not for the total duplication in shape it is surprising that nobody bid slam.

So what did you overcall with Hand J at (1) in this week's quiz? For me there is only one bid - 4♠. Anyway, North chose a perhaps pathetic 1♠. Double at (2) is negative showing 4♥'s and 6+ points. 2♥ at (3) is simply a weakish acceptance of ♥'s as trumps. 3♠ at (4) is silly. It probably occurred to North that he should have bid more on the first round – it's too late now – E-W have found their fit(s). 4NT at (5) is Blackwood with ♥'s agreed and it's plain sailing from now on. I have no idea why East passed at (6), is all four aces not enough? I suppose that they were playing Roman Keycard Blackwood, but with just one key card missing one should still bid a small slam.

And what happened? At another table N-S went for 800 in 5♠ doubled, quite why they reached the 5 level is beyond me (the 5 level belongs to the opponents – if they bid 5♦ or 5♥ then let it be). The other two contracts were 5♦. Do people not know about negative doubles? 4♥ scores more than 5♦ even if it makes a trick less.

As it happens, 6♥ is not that great. Played by East it goes down with an opening ♦ ruff. Played by West it needs the ♥K onside doubleton (no safe entry to the West hand after an initial ♠ lead). But 6♦ looks fine to me. The bottom lines: -

- With a weakish shapely hand, bid to the limit **first go**.
- Once you let the opponents find their fit it's too late to pre-empt.
- Play negative doubles.
- A negative double of a 1♠ overcall after partner's 1♣/♦ opening simply promises 6+ pts and 4♥'s, just the same as if RHO had passed and you bid 1♥.
- ♥'s score more than ♦'s. 10 tricks in ♥'s scores more than 11 tricks in ♦'s.
- But if you are slamming it's usually best to go for the safer contract. A 5-5 ♦ fit may be better than a 4-4 ♥ fit.
- Do not bid Blackwood to gauge partner's strength! If you have a hand that is good enough to bid Blackwood and find that there is just one ace (or keycard) missing then bid the small slam. If you needed more then you have mis-used Blackwood.
- The 5 level belongs to the opponents. If you push the opponents up to the 5 level then it's usually best to let them play there; maybe they will go one down, maybe they have slam?

Cuebid the enemy suit to show a sound raise.Board 14 from Friday 17th

Dealer:	♠ KQ75		<u>Table A</u>			
East	♥ AKJ43		West	North (G)	East	South
Love all	♦ 2		-	-	1♠ (1)	2♥ (2)
	♣ 1082		pass	3♥ (3)	pass	pass
			pass			
♠ 64	N	♠ J10932				
♥ 76	W E	♥ 2	<u>Table B</u>			
♦ KJ985	S	♦ A1043	West	North	East	South (H)
♣ Q964		♣ AJ7	-	-	pass	pass
	♠ A8		pass	1♥	1♠	2♣ (4)
	♥ Q10985		pass	pass		
	♦ Q76					
	♣ K53		<u>Table C</u>			
			West	North	East	South
			-	-	pass	pass
			pass	1♥	1♠	3♣ (4)
			pass	pass		

This board generated considerable discussion on Friday when I was asked to check the scores of two N-S pairs apparently playing in a silly 3-3 ♣ fit: -

- Table A: This East believes in the 'rule of 19' for opening hands. I've never heard of it (the rule of 20 is generally accepted). Anyway, a dubious opener and I suspect that most would pass at (1), as would I. 2♥ at (2) is obvious but what about that 3♥ bid at (3)? Pathetic is an understatement. What did you bid with Hand G in this week's quiz? Either 4♥ or a cuebid of 2♠ followed by 4♥ (to show a good raise to 4♥) or a 4♦ splinter are far better.
- Table B: This East and South both know about the rule of 20 (not 19) and so both sensibly passed. But South has a problem at (4). He is too good for 3♥ or even 4♥ so he bid a new suit, 2♣, forcing? If South were not a passed hand then this would be a sensible way to bid the hand, but 2♣ is no longer forcing with standard methods (whether there had been an overcall or not) by a passed hand. Fortunately the 1♠ overcall has helped! It's now simple, bid 2♠ and then 4♥ next go.
- Table C: This South realised that 2♣ at (4) was no longer forcing from a passed hand and so chose 3♣ - with a similar result! Whether 3♣ is forcing or not is up to you, but one thing is for sure - 2♠ is forcing!

And what happened? The 4th table bid sensibly and got to 4♥ making exactly. 3♥ made +2 and the ♣ contracts are not worthy of mention. I was asked how South should have bid if there was no overcall. The best answer is to play Drury. Then 2♣/♦ by a passed South are both forcing (and show ♥ support!). In this case 2♦ followed by 4♥ would show a sound raise with 4♥'s when playing 2 way Reverse Drury. The bottom lines: -

- In a competitive auction bidding the opponent's suit is a useful tool. It is usually to ask partner if he has a stop for NT, but if you subsequently support his suit it shows a hand that was too strong to support directly.
- A two level overcall is close to opening hand strength.

Pre-empt with 6 ♣'s?

Board 19 from Friday 17th

Dealer: ♠ A972
 South ♥ 76
 E-W vul ♦ AKQ7
 ♣ K108

Table A

West	North (K)	East	South
-	-	-	3♣ (1)
pass	5♣ (2)	pass	pass
pass			

♠ 63	N	♠ QJ104
♥ AKJ95	W E	♥ Q10832
♦ 1042	S	♦ 863
♣ J43		♣ 2
	♠ K85	
	♥ 4	
	♦ J95	
	♣ AQ9765	

Table B

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

This board generated considerable discussion on Friday.

Table A: Chuck has gone now so a 3♣ opening at (1) will not get much criticism. North's 5♣ raise looks very sensible to me. 6♣ is cold but difficult to bid?

Table B: This was the bidding that generated the discussion. South chose to pass and North's 1NT opener at (3) is obviously fine. 2♠ at (4) was a transfer to ♣'s. Now here is where it started to go wrong. Playing specific transfers to the minors (2♠ → 3♣ and 2NT → 3♦) then North should super-accept with 2NT at (5). Anyway, he failed to do so and the question is what does 3♥ at (5) mean? South meant it as asking for a ♥ stop and North apparently also thought that that was the case. I guess that you could agree to play it that way, but it is not standard. Standard is that it is natural, i.e. a 2nd suit. Anyway, North showed no ♥ stop in their system and South bid his ♣'s again. The question is – is 4♣ forcing here? Remember that South is a passed hand.

Difficult. Everything would have been so much simpler if North had acknowledged the ♣Kxx with a super-accept at (5). Then 5♣ (or perhaps 6♣ on a good day) would have been reached. This was not a good day.

And what happened? 5♣ made +1 and 4♣ +2. At other tables 3NT went one down and 3♥ by E-W went 2 down.

And how should the N-S bidding go assuming that South passes originally and you play 4-way transfers? How about :-

North	South	(1) transfer to ♣'s
1NT	2♠ (1)	(2) super-accept, 3 ♣'s to an honour
2NT (2)	4♦ (3)	(3) RKCB. It's up to you what you play as Blackwood when a
4♥ (3)	6♣	minor suit is agreed. 4NT is too high. Some play 4-of-the-
pass		minor and some play the suit above (Kickback).
		A 4♥ splinter at (3) is an alternative approach.
		(4) (0 or) 3 key cards.

The bottom lines: -

- AQxxxx is a golden holding if partner is known to hold Kxx(x). Playing 4-way transfers tells you this.
- Pre-empting with a decent 6 card ♣ suit is perfectly acceptable, that's what Marty sez.

Don't bid again after pre-empting unless invitedBoard 18 from Friday 17th

Dealer:	♠ AJ10	<u>Table A</u>			
East	♥ J10653	West	North	East	South
N-S vul	♦ 10	-	-	3♦	pass (1)
	♣ AQ85	pass	pass (2)		

♠ 87643	N	♠ 2	<u>Table B</u>			
♥ 82	W E	♥ K97	West	North	East	South
♦ K	S	♦ A987654	-	-	3♦	dbl (1)
♣ KJ1042		♣ 97	3♠ (3)	all pass		

♠ KQ95	<u>Table C</u>			
♥ AQ4	West	North	East (F)	South
♦ QJ32	-	-	3♦	dbl (1)
♣ 63	4♦ (3)	4♥	5♦ (4)	dbl
	all pass			

Another board that generated discussion on Friday: -

- Table A: It's not obvious what South should do at (1). With length and strength in ♦'s it's difficult. It's not quite enough for 3NT. I suspect that most would double but pass is fine. But pass is not fine at (2); this North hand is different – it is playable in 3 suits and should double. 3♥ is also a very reasonable alternative. Pass is not.
- Table B: This South chose to double at (1), fine. But West should pass at (3), 3♠ is terrible. Do not pull partner's 7 card suit into your 5 card suit!
- Table C: Now I said that West should pass at (3) (I would), but this 4♦ bid is not totally unreasonable – why make it easy for the opponents? But what did you bid with Hand F at (4) in this week's quiz? I don't like 5♦. Once you have pre-empted you have said it all – this hand has nothing more to say. Partner's 4♦ is NOT an invitation to bid on – it is merely a bid designed to make it difficult for the opposition. East has pre-empted and West is the captain and, what's more, this East is a good defensive hand. East should not bid again.

And what happened? 3♦ was minus 3 for the top to E-W. 5♦ was minus 5 for -1100 and the bottom to E-W. 3♠ was minus 6, so -300 for an undeserved average.

The bottom lines: -

- Once you have pre-empted, do not bid again unless partner invites. A raise from partner is simply upping the pre-empt and is not an invitation.
- When partner pre-empted he usually has a 7 card suit. Do not 'rescue' him into a 5 card suit.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: Pass. Both opponents are unlimited and partner has passed. You can only make a noise in this situation with a *shapely* hand. You are asking for a huge penalty if you bid 1NT (15-18).
- Hand B: 1♦. An easy one for regular news-sheet readers. This hand is totally flat (so deduct one point) and with most of the points outside the 4 card suit it has no redeeming features. It is not worth a strong NT (or an Acol 1NT rebid).
- Hand C: 1♦. If you do not play inverted minors then you cannot support ♣'s with a forcing bid. So bid 1♦ for now and see what happens.
- Hand D: Pass. This is a miserable 11 count. Partner has opened your doubleton suit and has denied both of your four card suits. It's a mis-fit. You will go down (in either 2NT or 3NT) far too many times if you bid on to make up for the odd occasion when everything is right and you make 3NT.
- Hand E: Pass. Partner's 4♠ is weak, usually 5 trumps and little else.
- Hand F: Pass. Partner is in charge. You have no more than your initial pre-empt. Maybe partner can set 4♥, maybe the opponents will miss slam, only partner knows. Under no circumstances should you bid again here.
- Hand G: 4♥ or 2♠ or a 4♦ splinter. The hand is too good for 2♥ or 3♥. And even 4♥ in my style. You can bid the opponent's suit and then bid 4♥ to show a sound raise to 4♥. A 4♦ splinter (♦ shortage and agreeing ♥'s) is also a good bid.
- Hand H: 4♥ or 2♠. Partner has opened 1♥ in 4th seat – this is a sound opener. You most certainly have game values. 4♥ is reasonable but you might miss slam. I prefer the cue bid of the opponent's suit and then 4♥ next go to show a sound raise to 4♥.
- Hand J: 4♠. It could be anybody's hand. You may have slam (unlikely). They may have slam (much more likely). 4♠ is where you will usually want to play, so bid it now before anybody finds out who's got what.
- Hand K: 5♣. Maybe 6♣ makes, maybe the opponents can make 4♥. Who knows? Maybe the opponents will bid over 5♣ and you can double them. 3NT is silly and 5♣ will normally make.



Club News Sheet – No. 99

24/9/2004



Monday 20/9/2004

Friday 24/9/2004

1st David/Kenneth 59%
 2nd = Tomas/Ian 55%
 2nd = Phil/Dave 55%

1st Eddie/Jan 64%
 2nd Alex/Jeff 60%

Bidding Quiz

Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.

- | | | |
|---------|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Hand A | Hand B | With Hand A partner opens 1♣, what do you respond? |
| ♠ 543 | ♠ Q73 | |
| ♥ AJ | ♥ 976 | With Hand B partner opens 1♥, what do you respond? |
| ♦ J84 | ♦ K3 | |
| ♣ KQ972 | ♣ AJ975 | |
| Hand C | Hand D | With Hand C partner opens 1NT, what do you respond? |
| ♠ K9842 | ♠ K954 | With Hand D you open 1♣, partner bids 1♠ and RHO bids 2♦. |
| ♥ Q974 | ♥ Q3 | What do you bid? |
| ♦ 93 | ♦ A | |
| ♣ 63 | ♣ KQ10432 | |
| Hand E | Hand F | What do you open with Hand E? |
| ♠ AK4 | ♠ A2 | |
| ♥ J108 | ♥ KQ653 | With Hand F you open 1♥ and partner responds 1♠. You bid |
| ♦ K7 | ♦ 1085 | 1NT and partner bids 2♠. What now? |
| ♣ AQJ73 | ♣ KQ2 | |

A Quickie

Board 4 from Friday 24th, both vul

West (E)	West	East
♠ AK4	1NT	3NT
♥ J108	pass	
♦ K7		
♣ AQJ73		

This was the auction at one table on Friday. I've been through this dozens of times but people still keep on doing it! I hope that you did not open 1NT with Hand E in this week's quiz? It's *much* too strong. 18 HCP's but that great 5 carder, the top cards and the working 10 make it worth much more. Correct is to open 1♣ and then jump to 2NT to show 18-19 pts.

What happened? The final contract was 3NT at every table and 13 tricks were easy.

The bottom line (I hope for the last time): -

- Do not open 1NT with a decent 18 points, you will miss slams.

Stayman or transfer with weak 5-4's?Board 7 from Monday 20th, both vul

Dealer: ♠ 76
 South ♥ 65
 Both vul ♦ AJ87
 ♣ AJ1072

Table A

West (C)	North	East	South
-	-	1NT	pass
2♥ (1)	pass	2♠	pass
pass	pass		

♠ K9842 N ♠ A10
 ♥ Q974 W E ♥ AK108
 ♦ 93 S ♦ 652
 ♣ 63 ♣ KQ94
 ♠ QJ53
 ♥ J32
 ♦ KQ104
 ♣ 85

Table B

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

Obviously 2♥ is a better contract for E-W than 2♠, so what went wrong at Table A?

What did you bid at (1) with Hand C in this week's quiz? I've been all through this before, but this is a quite graphic example and so maybe people will remember now? The answer is that with a weak hand and 5-4 or 4-5 in the majors you should not transfer, but bid Stayman. If partner bids 2♥ or 2♠ that's fine and you pass. If partner bids 2♦ then you bid two of your 5-carder, this is a weak bid.

Thus 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥ and 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♠ are weak bids and opener must pass.

Another Weak SequenceBoard 15 from Monday 20th, N-S vul

North South (F)
 ♠ KQ10984 ♠ A2
 ♥ 42 ♥ KQ653
 ♦ 72 ♦ 1085
 ♣ 1084 ♣ KQ2

Table A

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

Table B

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

Two fairly typical sequences from Monday: -

Table A: (1) A 1♥ opening was the choice of everybody on Monday; this is an excellent 14 count and I would not argue with a strong 1NT opening. 2♥ at (2) is fine if you play 4 card majors, I would rebid 1NT (if I had not opened 1NT). 2♠ at (3) here is a weakish (vaguely constructive) bid and so South should pass at (4).

Table B: Much the same here, except that South chose the 1NT rebid. 2♠ here is definitely weak and so pass at (4) is correct.

And what happened? Three tables managed to stop in 2♠ but two got too high (3♠ and 3NT). The bottom line: - These sequences (especially Table B) are weak.

Discards and Signals etc in Defence

I Have been asked to cover this again. The problem is that there are always a number of casual partnerships and I was asked if I could make a few notes on a decent defensive system that a casual partnership (or a more permanent one) could adopt. This is what I played with Chuck and if it's good enough for Chuck..... It may not be the best but is quite adequate and, most important, it is what the majority of reasonable players play.

Leading

Top from all honour sequences. So A from AK, K from KQ etc.

Low card promises an honour. So 3 from Q73 etc.

Do not underlead an ace in a suit contract.

The lead of an ace generally promises the king.

Suppose that you hold QJ10 in a suit. If you wish to lead this suit, then it's the Q. If somebody else leads the suit then play the 10. So top of a sequence when leading but bottom when following suit.

Encouraging (or discouraging) partner.

HELD

Let's start with the attitude signal. When partner leads a suit it is often beneficial to let him know if you like the suit (and want him to continue) or if you don't like it. The most common approach is to play a **H**ighish card to **E**ncourage and a **L**ow card to **D**iscourage, so HELD. For example, if you hold Q92 in a suit and partner leads the ace then play the 9 as you want him to continue. If you hold J92 then play the 2 to discourage.

Discarding – Suit preference.

Lavinthal (aka McKenney)

When you are defending and cannot follow suit, then you have to discard something. It is often best to convey some sort of information to your partner with this discard and there are various schemes. One of the best and most commonly used is Lavinthal, also known as McKenney. The most important point is that you **DO NOT** discard in a suit that you like, but discard from one of the other suits. There are two remaining suits and the size of your discard indicates which of these remaining two suits you like, a high/middle card indicates the higher ranking and a low card the lower ranking.

For example, you are discarding on ♥'s and would like partner to lead a ♦. Discard either a low club (so asks for the lowest ranking of ♠'s and ♦'s) or discard a high ♠ (so asks for the highest ranking of ♣'s and ♦'s). Note that you always have a choice of two suits to discard from and can usually make the signal clear. When you are defending it is important to take special note of partner's *first* discard – that will tell you which suit he likes.

I have witnessed countless occurrences of people throwing away a trick in defence (especially in NT contracts) by discarding in a suit to indicate that they like that suit – that system really sucks. Don't discard from a suit you like, play McKenney.

- | | |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ♠ A1063 | Lavinthal Suit preference is also used in other situations. Suppose that you |
| ♥ 74 | are on lead defending a ♥ contract. You lead the ♦A and get an encouraging |
| ♦ AK83 | ♦9 from partner. So you continue with the ♦K and he plays the ♦2. So he |
| ♣ 873 | encouraged. Suppose that you know from the bidding that partner is probably |
| | ruffing the next ♦; which ♦ do you lead? The answer is the ♦8. This is Lavinthal and |
| | asks partner to lead back a ♠ (the ♦3 would ask for a ♣).. |

Good enough for an invitation?

Board 17 from Monday 20th, love all

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ A1063	♠ 82	-	pass	pass	pass
♥ AK74	♥ Q1052	1NT	pass	2♣ (1)	pass
♦ K3	♦ Q8654	2♥	pass	3♥	pass
♣ K73	♣ A9	4♥	all pass		

So has East got enough for Stayman at (1) and the subsequent 3♥ invitation? Just 8 points with two unsupported queens. But actually this is a respectable hand, the shape is great and it's well worth an invitation. This good bidding was replicated at 3 other tables. Just how the other table ended up in a miserable 3NT is a mystery, has Stayman not reached Belgium yet?

Nobody in slam

Board 25 from Monday 20th, E-W vul

North (D) South

♠ K954	♠ AQ632
♥ Q3	♥ K9
♦ A	♦ Q63
♣ KQ10432	♣ A97

Table A

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

Table B

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

Table C

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

An easy slam missed at every table on Monday, what went wrong?

Table A: The North hand is a very nice 14 points and 1♣ is the obvious opener. But what did you rebid at (2) with Hand D in this week's quiz? If South had responded 1♦ or 1♥ then this North hand is still respectable and so should bid 1♠. But when South bids 1♠ then this North hand is no longer a respectable 14 count – it's a monster. 2♠ at (2) is feeble. 4♠ at (3) is fine and North should obviously make a move at (4) having failed to do so previously.

Table B: This North realised that he hand a good hand and so bid 3♠ at (2). This is better but this time it was South who failed to bid up. North's pass at (4) is correct – he's made his move.

Table C: Now this is more like it! 4♦ at (2) is a cue bid agreeing ♦'s and looking for slam. With excellent cards and the all-important ♣A it should have been easy for South to bid on to the slam.

And what happened? Everybody was in 4♠ and everybody made 13 tricks. Easy for me to score. And what should the bidding be? North needs to make a noise and it's between an invitational 3♠ and a game forcing bid. I like North's effort at Table C.

Pairs Tactics?Board 12 from Friday 24th

Dealer: ♠ AKJ8
 West ♥ KJ
 N-S vul ♦ 10654
 ♣ 1086

Table A

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

♠ 64	N	♠ Q73
♥ AQ532	W E	♥ 976
♦ AQJ87	S	♦ K3
♣ 3		♣ AJ975

♠ 10952
 ♥ 1084
 ♦ 92
 ♣ KQ42

Table B

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

Table A: Quite sensible bidding? What did you bid with Hand B at (1) in this week's quiz? 10 points and 3 card support for partner, so 3♥? Possibly, but the best way to show 3 card support and invitational values is to bid a minor first, as here. 3♥ at (2) is thus invitational with exactly 3♥'s. Fine?

Table B: I'm not so sure! I was East at Table B and bid just 2♥ at (1). This really is a miserable hand in support of♥'s (all the points outside♥'s). With a doubleton, supporting♥'s is better than 1NT or 2NT and I think that 2♥ is quite sufficient, one should not stretch for very thin games at pairs scoring. And now it's North in the spotlight. Do you let the opponents play quietly in 2♥ or do you make a noise? With 4 points in♥'s it may be prudent to keep quiet. Anyway, North decided upon a not too unreasonable 2♠. But the vulnerability was wrong and East made a typical pairs double – looking for the 'magic 200'.

And what happened? North luckily found South with 4 card support but 2♠ was still one down and East got his magic 200 for the E-W top. 4♥ went one down. Just one pair managed to stop in 3♥. Another E-W somehow managed to overbid to 5♥ and went down - how can you bid like that and still come 2nd, Alex/Jeff?

The bottom lines: -

- With 10 points it's marginal if you should raise partner's major to 2 or 3. Look at the whole hand; 3 card support with no honour is bad – downgrade.
- Be wary of competing with a flat hand when vulnerable, just one down is -200 and scores a bottom on a partscore deal.

And a few words on the difference between pairs and teams (or rubber bridge) scoring: -

- Be aware of the vulnerability. At pairs scoring (but not at teams) it is often a good bet to double opponents when they are vulnerable even though you only expect a one trick set.
- This is one of the big differences between pairs and teams scoring. At teams it is unwise to double for a one trick set – the small gain (200 as opposed to 100) is not worth the huge score (-690 as opposed to -110) lost if they make it. At pairs it's not so important – you get a number of tops (+200) for the occasional bottom (-690).
- At pairs winning is all important, the margin of victory is irrelevant.
- At teams size matters.

4th suit forcing?

Board 14 from Friday 24th, love all

West	East (A)	West	North	East	South
♠ AK2	♠ 543	-	-	pass	pass
♥ 9742	♥ AJ	1♣	pass	1♦ (1)	pass
♦ Q105	♦ J84	1♥ (2)	pass	1♠ (3)	pass
♣ A105	♣ KQ972	pass (4)	pass		

A silly contract, let's have a look: -

East has a tricky response here. Did you respond 1NT or 2NT (or 2♣ or 3♣) with Hand A at (1) in this week's quiz? This pair play a short ♣ but I don't really like either 2♣ or 3♣ anyway. It's a bit good for 1NT and so that leaves 2NT. But there is another option, I like the 'wait and see' bid of 1♦. At (2) 1♥ is correct – never deny a 4 card major, even if it is 9 high. And now East is back with the same problem at (3) that he started with. Partner may still have just 2 ♣'s (if 4432 shape) and this East hand is worth an effort. But now East has another option – 4th suit forcing! I believe that a 4th suit bid of 1♠ is fine here. It's the 4th suit and I like to play that it may or may not be natural at the one level (but it's still forcing). Whether East thought that it was natural or not does not really matter on this deal – 1NT is the obvious bid.

And what happened. 1♠ luckily made, but it was still a frigid bottom with 2NT and 3♣ making at other tables. 1NT or 2NT making 8 or 9 tricks would have scored well.

The bottom lines: -

- 4th suit forcing is forcing, whether by a passed hand or not.
- 1♠ in the auction 1♣ - 1♦ - 1♥ - 1♠ is best played as maybe natural maybe not, but definitely forcing. With a weak hand and a 4 card ♠ suit responder could bid 1♠ directly instead of introducing the ♦ suit, especially if a passed hand.
- Do not play in a Moysian fit unless you have a weak doubleton/singleton/whatever.
- Do not be in a rush to support partner's minor suit opening – NT scores more and it may be a 3 card suit.
- Keep it simple (so 2NT here) with an unfamiliar partner?

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: 2NT. Let's look at the 'obvious' alternatives:- 2♣ - it's too strong. 3♣ - reasonable, but partner may not have ♣'s. 1NT – a bit feeble with a (possible) fit. There is one sensible alternative, I bid 1♦ - partner's rebid should make your next bid easier.
- Hand B: 2♥. Another perhaps tricky one. This hand is not worth 3♥ (either directly or via 2♣) in my opinion.
- Hand C: 2♣. Bid Stayman rather than transferring when 5-4 or 4-5 in the majors.
- Hand D: 3♠. The bidding has improved this hand immensely. 2♠ is feeble. A 4♦ splinter is quite reasonable but it's not usually good to splinter with a singleton ace. 3♦ is also possible but I think it's best to show your support. I would not argue with 4♠.
- Hand E: 1♣ (and rebid 2NT). This hand is *much* too good for a 1NT opener.
- Hand F: Pass. Partner's bid is weak, usually a 6 card suit.



Monday 27/9/2004

Friday 1/10/2004

1st Dave/Bob 63%
2nd Tomas/Philip(Ire) 56%

1st Tomas/Philip(Ire) 65%
2nd = Jan/Jimmy & Clive/Ken 56%

Bidding Quiz

Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.

Hand A

Hand B

♠ KQ654
♥ K952
♦ Q
♣ 986

♠ KQ52
♥ AK42
♦ A7
♣ K87

With Hand A partner passes as does RHO and so you elect to open this heap with a 3rd seat 1♠ opening. LHO bids 2♦ and partner bids 3♣, what do you do?

With Hand B you open 1♣, LHO overcalls 1♠ round to you.
(a) What do you do?
(b) What would you do if RHO had raised to 2♠?

Hand C

Hand D

♠ -
♥ K632
♦ KJ96
♣ K10652

♠ J1064
♥ Q98
♦ Q
♣ AQ543

With Hand C partner opens 1NT, what do you bid?

With Hand D RHO opens 1♣, what do you do?

Hand E

Hand F

♠ 1083
♥ KQJ86
♦ 1096
♣ Q10

♠ AKQ975
♥ -
♦ AQ4
♣ AJ93

With Hand E partner opens 1♠ and RHO bids 2♥. What do you bid?

(a) What do you open with Hand F?
(b) What do you open if you play Benjamin twos?

Hand G

Hand H

♠ 75
♥ A543
♦ Q986
♣ A104

♠ QJ54
♥ K3
♦ K943
♣ Q53

With Hand G partner opens 1♠, what do you respond.

With Hand H LHO opens 1♣ and partner and RHO both pass. What do you do?

Hand J

Hand K

♠ AKQ95
♥ J7
♦ AK2
♣ 983

♠ A10
♥ KJ4
♦ 109653
♣ AQ10

With Hand J you open 1♠ :-

(a) What do you rebid if partner bids 1NT?
(b) What do you rebid if partner bids 2♦?
(a) What do you open with Hand K?
(b) Suppose that you open 1♦, partner bids 1♥ and you rebid 1NT. Partner then bids 2♦, what do you do?

Hand L

Hand M

♠ J73
♥ AKQ1054
♦ 982
♣ A

♠ AKQJ652
♥ Q863
♦ -
♣ K6

With Hand L you open 1♥ :-

(a) What do you do if partner responds 1♠?
(b) What do you do if LHO overcalls 2♦ and partner bids 2♠?

With Hand M you open 1♠, What do you rebid if partner: -
(a) bids 1NT? (b) bids 2♣?

3♥ by whom?

Board 26 from Monday 27th

Dealer: ♠ AJ98
East ♥ Q43
Both vul ♦ AK986
♣ 7

♠ KQ654	N	♠ 73
♥ K952	W E	♥ 87
♦ Q	S	♦ 752
♣ 986		♣ AKQJ104

♠ 102
♥ AJ106
♦ J1043
♣ 532

Table A

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

Table B

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

Obviously something silly has happened when both N-S and E-W end up in 3♥ minus two, let's have a look.

These two East's both chose to pass at (1), 3♣ anyone? And both of these West's chose to open this miserable West hand, I suppose it's OK in 3rd seat. Both East's then decided that their ♣ suit was robust enough to bid at (3). I'm not arguing, as East is a passed hand he can safely bid 3♣ here, partner will hopefully not get carried away. But then the paths diverged: -

Table A: This South chose to pass at (4). The LAW says that 3♦ is fine and that's what I would bid. Anyway, back to West. What did you bid with Hand A at (5) in this week's quiz? Partner has bid 3♣ and so you have to bid either 3♥ or 3♠, right?

Wrong! Partner is a passed hand! This West hand is just an 8 count (♦Q is waste paper). With 3 card ♣ support pass is clear at (5). Also, I would consider 3♥ at (5) as forcing (a new suit at the 3 level by an unlimited hand - how else would West show a good hand?).

Table B: I guess that this South got confused about not denying a 4 card major? This South hand is not strong enough to introduce a new suit at the 3 level. As I said, I would bid 3♦ and pass is the only other alternative.

And what happened? 3♥ went down two for 200 away for a bottom no matter who played it. The other 3 tables all landed in sensible ♦ partscores by N-S making 10 tricks. Note that E-W can make 9 (maybe 10) tricks in ♣'s. Nobody can make anything in ♥'s.

The bottom lines: -

- You need a good hand to introduce a new suit at the 3 level.
- You do not need to rebid (especially at the 3 level) opposite a passed partner.
- Despite what Chuck says it is generally accepted that one can open 3♣ with a decent 6 card suit. This is obviously a good East hand and perhaps too strong for a pre-empt, but I think that 3♣ is OK vulnerable (it's too good if not vulnerable).

5-3 is better than 6-2?

Board 20 from Monday 27th

Now I am continually saying that a 5-3 is good but a that the 4-4 fit is better. What about a 6-2 fit? Obviously good, but if a 5-3 fit also exists then the 5-3 fit may be preferable: -

Dealer:	♠ AK854	<u>Table A</u>				
West	♥ 76	West	North	East	South (L)	
Both vul	♦ Q5	pass	pass	pass	1♥	
	♣ 10872	pass	1♠	pass	4♣ (1)	
		pass	4♥ (2)	all pass		
♠ 1096	N	♠ Q2	<u>Table B</u>			
♥ J9	W E	♥ 832	West	North	East	South (L)
♦ AK763	S	♦ J104	pass	pass	pass	1♥
♣ K64		♣ QJ953	2♦	2♠ (3)	pass	3♥ (4)
	♠ J73		pass	4♥	all pass	
	♥ AKQ1054					
	♦ 982					
	♣ A					

Nobody found the 5-3 ♠ fit, let's have a look at these two tables: -

Table A: So what did you bid with Hand L(a) at (1) in this week's quiz? It's a nice hand but not worth a game force opposite a 1 level response. I would invite with 3♥. 4♣ was apparently asking for aces and 4♥ said one. Now this is terrible bidding. If you ask for aces and find just one missing then you should bid the small slam – do not use Blackwood to gauge partner's strength – it does not do that. This South hand is nowhere near good enough to leap into slam mode with no known fit, especially opposite a passed partner who may have just 6 points and has max 11.

Table B: This time there was an overcall and so North bid 2♠ at (3). Now this actually helps South as he knows that partner has 9-11 points or so and also that he has a 5 card ♠ suit (North would negative double with less points or with only 4 ♠'s). So what did you bid at (4) with hand L(b) in this week's quiz? Unlike Table A we now have game values after a two-level bid from partner; I would bid 4♠ but 4♥ is reasonable. I think that 4♠ is a far better bid with a known 5-3 fit. Anyway, North 'obviously' raises 3♥ to 4♥ here and that makes +1.

And what happened? 4♥ was bid 3 times, making +1 once and exactly the other two times. Two pairs somehow subsided in 3♥. Quite how many South could fail to make 11 tricks on this lay-out may seem baffling, but I saw how one South did it. He took the first ♠ trick with the ♠ A and then later he led the ♠ J from hand and (after some 'thought') let it run. Without the ♠ 10 (and 9) this is a no-win play, if West had the ♠ Q he will cover. The best way to play these ♠'s when missing the Q, 10 and 9 is to lay down the ♠ A and ♠ K and hope.

And what would have happened if I was South? We would have been in 4♠. East would have been on lead and would probably find a ♣ lead. Even on a bad day my partner (whoever) would then have made 13 tricks! The 5-3 fit is superior as you get 4 discards (if you need that many) from the North hand on the ♥'s and you get two ♣ ruffs from the short trump hand (if you need them). If they do find a ♦ lead then you still easily get 11 tricks. This is not that good an example but 5-3 is usually better than 6-2. The bottom lines: -

- A 5-3 fit is better than a 6-2 fit if the 6 card suit is solid.
- If you do not have the 10 of the suit then you cannot lead the J as a 'finesse'.

Responding to 1NT with a shortage – part 1Board 4 from Monday 27th, both vul

North	South (C)	South2	West	North	East	South
♠ J875	♠ -	♠ -	pass	1NT	pass	2♣
♥ AQJ7	♥ K632	♥ K632	pass	2♥	pass	4♥
♦ A104	♦ KJ96	♦ KJ96	all pass			
♣ A7	♣ K10652	♣ KQ652				

Very sensible bidding. And what happened? 4♥ either made or made +1. Quite how two pairs managed to end up in 3NT (minus 1) is a total mystery to me.

Actually, 6♥ is a reasonable contract and only needs finding the ♦Q (it was with East which is the natural way to finesse the suit). Give South a couple more points (say the ♣Q) and he should go slamming, but how do you reach 6♥ with South2?

There are a couple of options. You can bid Stayman as here and when the ♥ fit is uncovered you can splinter with 3♠. But if opener denies 4♥'s there may well be a minor suit fit for slam. There is a means of discovering this (SARS) and I have a few pages on it if you are interested. An alternative approach is to splinter directly over the 1NT opening if you play 3♣/♦/♥/♠ as splinters (most people don't). A ♠ splinter would show shortage there and slam interest in any of the other 3 suits.

Responding to 1NT with a shortage – part 2Board 13 from Monday 27th, both vul

West	East1	East2	West	North	East	South
♠ -	♠ AKJ4	♠ Q642	-	pass	1NT	pass
♥ A843	♥ Q92	♥ KQ9	2♣	pass	2♠	pass
♦ A765	♦ 98	♦ K9	3NT	all pass		
♣ AJ832	♣ KQ104	♣ KQ104				

East1 was the hand from Monday and everybody got this one right, landing in 3NT – but the bidding was not very scientific! Obviously if East had his some of his ♠ values elsewhere then 6♣ would be there and I was asked how 6♣ could have been bid opposite say East2.

Again there are the two options outlined above, and since West is definitely interested in slam in anything but ♠'s I prefer the direct splinter option here. So West bids 3♠ (showing ♠ shortage) and East1 then simply bids 3NT – no problem. But with East2 (little wastage in ♠'s) East is looking for slam and 6♣ is then easy to bid (East asks for aces).

The bottom lines (for both of the above deals): -

- A combined 28 points is often enough for slam *with a fit*.
- If you have shortage opposite partner's 1NT opening there are various options. You can splinter directly. You can bid Stayman and then splinter over a 2♥/♠ response. You can transfer into (any) 6 card suit and then splinter or you can ascertain partner's distribution via Stayman and then SARS.
- This use of direct splinters or the use of SARS (Shape Asking Relays after Stayman) to establish minor suit fits are by no means standard.
- I have a book on NT bidding that covers all of this (and a lot more). Let me know if you want to borrow it, but be aware that it is rather advanced.

Editorial About our club and how I bend the rules?

I was called over as director a couple of times on Friday and I was not too impressed. I was used to these sort of calls by Chuck – is it catching? One incident was because the opposition were talking in a foreign language. Now the Club language is English and it is courteous for all foreigners to speak English at the table when the other players do not speak their language. But we have to be tolerant and understand that there are a couple of players who's English is very poor – so please don't make an issue of this. I'm absolutely sure that the foreign pairs are not cheating and will translate if you ask; and I note that Alex does usually give a brief translation of what his partner has said.

The other incident was when dummy had ♦ AKxxx on table and declarer called for a ♦. Next player quickly played the ♦ Q and declarer then said that he meant the ace. The defender called for the director. Now I would most certainly expect this sort of behavior from Chuck, and the defender may have been right according to the rules. But do we need this? Defender surely knew that declarer wished to play the ace, so give him a little extra time to designate the card or for dummy to ask which one. This is a friendly club. Isn't it?

Yet another incident was when one player bid 1♥ and the next also bid 1♥. On being informed that this was inadequate he changed it to 1♠. Now if the guilty party had intended to bid ♥'s then a penalty is in order (partner barred). However, since this was a mechanical error there is no problem – mechanical errors (extracting the wrong card from the box) are only human and may be corrected with no penalty before the next player has bid.

It's up to you what you do when the opposition revoke. The rules say to call the director and this is what you should do if play has continued for a while. However, I don't bother if the revoke is easily rectified next trick. Up to you. Is winning that important?

The bottom line. Not everybody in this club is an expert, please be considerate towards less gifted players and towards players who do not speak English that well.

Strong Hand Bidding – part 1

Board 22 from Monday 27th

Dealer: ♠ Q105
East ♥ 974
E-W vul ♦ QJ7
 ♣ KJ87

♠ K4 N ♠ A863
♥ KQJ10862 W E ♥ 53
♦ K8 S ♦ A9643
♣ A6 ♣ 43
 ♠ J972
 ♥ A
 ♦ 1052
 ♣ Q10952

Table A

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

Table B

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

Table A: If you do not play strong twos or Benjamin then this is the correct bidding up to (1). This jump at (1) is strong but not forcing. East should bid 4♥ at (2) of course.

Table B: The bidding at most tables, fine.

And what happened? 4♥ was bid 3 times (+1 twice, +2 once), this one table bid 3♥ (+2) and one pair bid 6♥ making. The slam is not a good one but 12 tricks are there on a non-♠ lead as the ♦'s split 3-3 and you can set up the ♦ suit in dummy after a ruff.

Strong Hand Bidding – part 2

Board 6 from Monday 27th

Dealer: ♠ J42
East ♥ 72
E-W vul ♦ 752
♣ 76542

♠ 1083	N	♠ AKQ975
♥ KQJ86	W E	♥ -
♦ 1096	S	♦ AQ4
♣ Q10		♣ AJ93
	♠ 6	
	♥ A109543	
	♦ KJ83	
	♣ K8	

Three totally different auctions, 2♦
and I only really like one of them.
Let's have a look: -

Table A

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

Table B

West	North	East (F)	South
-	-	2♣ (1)	pass
2♦ (5)	pass	2♠ (6)	pass
pass (7)	pass		

Table C

West	North	East	South
-	-	2♣ (1)	pass
(8) pass	2♠ (9)	pass	
3♥ (10)	pass	3♠ (11)	pass
4♠	all pass		

Table A: So what did you open with Hand F in this week's quiz? A game forcing 2♣ I hope.

This hand has 9½ playing tricks and is too strong for anything but your strongest bid. If you play Benjamin twos then it's too strong for 2♣ followed by either 2♠ or 3♠, open a game forcing 2♦ if playing Benjamin. Give partner the ♦K and nothing else and 4♠ is easy. Anyway, this East elected to open 1♠ and South overcalled 2♥. Now what should West do? What did you bid with Hand E in this week's quiz? This is a nice hand and playing negative doubles I would pass, awaiting partner's 'automatic' re-opening double. With shortage in the opponent's suit, East should re-open with an 'automatic' double – that would have led to +800 or +1100 even at this vulnerability. But East found a somewhat pathetic 2♠ and so the bonanza was gone and they ended up in the par contract when West bid 4♠.

Table B: This E-W play Benjamin twos and East elected to open 2♣ (8-9 playing tricks in an unspecified suit). As I said above I consider this hand too strong and I would open a game forcing 2♦ if playing Benjamin. Anyway, West bid 2♦, waiting, and East then bid 2♠ at (6), promising 8 playing tricks in ♠'s. Please re-read what I said on playing tricks in news-sheet 72. This East hand is about 9½ playing tricks. West then believed that he did not have enough to bid on opposite 8 playing tricks in ♠'s and passed at (7). I would bid 3♥ (forcing) or 4♠. I suggest that West re-read my page (news-sheet 72) on responding to Benjamin two's. I stated there that responder should bid on over partner's Benjamin two with: - *'as little as a king, the queen of trumps or even just 3 or 4 trumps'*. This West hand has a king (and queen and jack and three 10's!) and also 3 trumps to the 10. It is *far* too good to pass. So there you have it, since this pair regularly score in the 60%'s, who knows what they will achieve once they sort out their strong hand bidding?

Table C: This E-W pair play Standard American and they got it right. 2♠ at (9) is game forcing so the 3♥ at (10) and 3♠ at (11) also are. Good show, Alex/Jeff.

Strong Hand Bidding – part 3

Board 27 from Monday 27th

Dealer: ♠ J1064
South ♥ Q98
Love all ♦ Q
♣ AQ543

♠ KQ52	N	♠ 98
♥ AK42	W E	♥ J763
♦ A7	S	♦ J10653
♣ K87		♣ J2

♠ A74
♥ 105
♦ K9842
♣ 1096

Table A

West (B)	North(D)	East	South
-	-	-	pass
1♣	1♠ (1)	pass	pass
pass (2)			

Table B

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

Table A: So what did you bid with Hand D at (1) in this week's quiz. If West had opened any other suit then 2♣ would be OK, but over a 1♣ opening you are fixed. Now some experts say that it is acceptable to overcall with a good 4 card suit in these circumstances – but this is *not* a good 4 card suit! Pass is the correct bid.

Anyway, this comes round to West; what did you bid with Hand B(a) at (2) in this week's quiz? Playing negative doubles you usually double here in case partner has a penalty double, but that is unlikely here as you hold such great ♠'s and so this is an exception. With about 18-20 points and good cover in the overcalled suit, 1NT is best.

Table B: At Table 2 North also found this offbeat 1♠ overcall and this time South reasonably raised to 2♠. What should West do now? What did you do with Hand B(b) at (4) in the quiz? As I said above, 1NT is fine at (2) but 2NT is too high – partner is very likely to be bust. Now East said that West should double (2♠ will not make). That is nonsense of course as it would be for take-out. This time West should pass at (4).

And what happened? There was a real mixed bag of results on this board. At Table A 1♠ made exactly for the N-S top. At Table B 2NT was minus one for another good N-S score. Other E-W's managed to stop in 1♥, 1NT and 3♥; all of which made exactly.

The bottom lines: -

- Normally, when playing negative doubles, if you open and LHO overcalls and partner and RHO pass then you should re-open with a double as partner may have a penalty pass.
- But if you hold a very strong hand with good stoppers in the enemy suit then it's unlikely that partner has a penalty pass and so bid 1NT with about 18-19 points.
- Do not overcall with 4 card suits.
- Know which doubles are for take out before you incorrectly criticise partner.

Strong Hand Bidding – part 4

Board 2 from Friday 1st

North (J)	South (G)
♠ AKQ95	♠ 75
♥ J7	♥ A543
♦ AK2	♦ Q986
♣ 983	♣ A104

Table A

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

Table B

West	North	East	South
-	-	pass	pass
pass	1♠	pass	1NT (1)
pass	2NT (4)	pass	pass (5) we
pass			

Three tables out of 4 missed a simple 27 point game on Friday, need to investigate: -

Table A: So what did you respond at (1) with Hand G in this week's quiz? It's 10 points so borderline between a two-level 2♦ bid and 1NT. But this is a poor hand opposite a 1♠ opening and I would choose 1NT. But what about this 2♠ bid at (2)! What did you bid with Hand J(a) in this week's quiz? Your partner's 2♦ bid promises a good 10+ points, this North hand must either bid game or make a forcing bid. 2♠ is obviously woefully inadequate as is 3♦, 3♠ is not enough (not forcing). 4♠ or 3NT are too unilateral for me. I would 'dig up' a 3♣ bid and see what partner does. Here he would probably bid 3NT which I would pass.

Table B: This South chose 1NT at (1), with which I agree. But what did you bid with Hand J(b) at (4) in this week's quiz? After a 1NT response to you opening bid, a raise to 2NT is 17-18 points. This is a good 17 points and so 2NT is correct. Of course South should have raised to 3NT at (5).

And what happened? 9 tricks were easy in NT as the ♦J10 fell in two rounds. But the only table to bid game (3NT) somehow went down! Thus N-S got a top at Table B for being in a NT contract. The other two tables made 9 tricks in ♠'s and got an average.

The bottom lines: -

- If you know that your side has 27+ points, do not make a weak bid (2♠ here).
- If you know that your side has 27+ points, do not make an invitational bid (3♠ here).
- Do not be in a rush to rebid a 5 card suit if there is an alternative.
- If you know that your side has 27+ points, make a *forcing* bid or bid game.
- If you open with one of a suit and partner bids 1NT, then 2NT is 17-18 pts.

A plug for 2/1.

What do you think about my suggested 3♣ bid at (2)? No one syllable answers allowed. I hope you all agree that it is the only sensible bit (have a word with me if you think that there is a reasonable alternative). So, it is 'standard practice' that a new minor at the 3 level may not be real after you have opened with one of a major. So therefore responder should not support this suit!

As I said, there really is no option but to invent a 3♣ bid here, not totally satisfactory! – it's just another reason why I like to play 2/1. Playing 2/1 2♦ at (1) would be game forcing and so 2♠ at (2) is the bid if you play 2/1. Easy, eh?

Strong Hand Bidding – part 5

Board 19 from Monday 27th, E-W vul.

West (M)	East 1	East 2	<u>Table A</u>			
			West	North	East	South
♠ AKQJ652	♠ 109	♠ 109	-	-	-	pass
♥ Q863	♥ 92	♥ AKJ3	1♠	pass	2♣	pass
♦ -	♦ AKJ3	♦ 92	3♠ (1)	pass	4♠	pass
♣ K6	♣ A8752	♣ A8752	4NT (2)	pass	5♥	pass
			6♠	all pass		

‘Expert Table’

West	North	East	South	<u>Table B</u>			
-	-	-	pass	West	North	East	South
1♠	pass	2♣	pass	-	-	-	pass
4♠ (2)	pass	5♣ (3)	pass	1♠	dbl	2♣	pass
5♦ (4)	pass	? (5)		4♠ (1)	pass	pass (3)	pass

Table A: If you don’t play strong twos then 1♠ is the correct opening. But what did you bid at (1) with Hand M(b) in this week’s quiz? I don’t like 3♠, after East has responded at the two level then this hand has game values and I would bid either 3♥ or 4♠. This is a very rare occasion where I would deny the 4 card ♥ suit as it is so weak and the ♠’s are so good. This 4♠ bid, contrary to some people’s belief, is not shut-out. It shows a strong hand that expects to make 4♠ opposite minimal support from partner. Anyway, East 1 raised to 4♠ and here comes the inconsistency. 3♠ at (1) is non-forcing, partner raises to game and suddenly West is in slam mode? Anyway, you should not bid Blackwood at (2) with a wide open suit. You should also not bid Blackwood with a void – if there is one ace missing then how do you know if it’s the void suit or not?

Table B: Here there was interference but that does not really matter, 4♠ is still correct at (1). But I would bid on with the East hand at (3) ...

‘Expert Table’ So how do you reach slam if East has, say, the East 2 hand? As I said, you cannot use Blackwood and so you have to cue bid. I prefer 4♠ to 3♥ at (2). The bidding should start 1♠ - 2♣ - 4♠, West has shown a big hand with excellent ♠’s and East should look for slam at (3). East also cannot bid Blackwood (for the same reason – a weak suit) and so he should cue bid. 5♣ at (3) shows the ♣A and West then cues ♦’s (a void) at (4). With East 1 East bids 5♠ at (5) denying a ♥ control and we stop in 5♠. East 2 cues the ♥A with 5♥ at (5) and West bids 6♠.

And what happened? Everyone but Table A stopped in 4♠ and everyone made 11 tricks.

The bottom liners: -

- When opener jumps to 3 of his original suit it is invitational (about 16-17 points) but it is not forcing.
- When opener jumps to 4 of his original suit it shows a very strong hand (about 18-20 points). Responder is invited to investigate slam with a suitable hand.
- Do not bid Blackwood with a wide open suit.
- Do not bid Blackwood with a void.
- If you can’t bid Blackwood, then cue bid.

Pass a take-out double?

Board 16 from Monday 27th

Dealer: ♠ J
West ♥ 1065
E-W vul ♦ KQ8752
♣ J109

Table A
West North East South
pass pass 1♦ 1♥ (1)
pass pass pass

♠ Q843 N ♠ K1097
♥ Q82 W E ♥ 94
♦ 103 S ♦ AJ964
♣ 8543 ♣ A2
♠ A652
♥ AKJ73
♦ -
♣ KQ76

Table B
West North East South
pass pass 1♦ dbl (1)
pass pass (2) pass

Table C
West North East South
pass pass 1♦ dbl (1)
pass 1NT (2) pass 2♥ (3)
pass pass pass

Table A: This South hand is far to good for a simple overcall. Double at (1) is correct, followed by some strong action next bid...

Table B: ... this South doubled but he got no next bid! So what do you think of North's pass of the double at (2)? It's not usually a good idea but this suit is probably just good enough and the vulnerability screams out for it. If N-S have game then E-W will surely go two down for 500?

Table C: This North made a quite reasonable 1NT bid at (2), showing 6-9 points and a ♦ stop. So what should South do now at (3)? 2♥ shows a hand that is too good for an overcall but it may be a bit feeble with this great hand. 3♥ is very reasonable and 3♦ is an alternative. Hopefully you then end up in 4♥.

And what happened? 4♥ is perhaps difficult to reach, but not with Jeff's style of bidding. Jeff/Alex made ♥ +1 for a near top of +450. This was only beaten by the 500 penalty for 1♦ minus two doubled. All other tables were in 1♥ or 2♥ making 10 tricks.

The bottom lines: -

- Do not make a simple overcall with a rock-crusher.
- It is not normally correct to pass partner's take-out double; only consider it with a very good suit (this North is the minimum for the action) at favourable vulnerability.

A weak sequence

Board 12 from Monday 27th, N-S vul.

North	South
♠ Q42	♠ A10
♥ 9653	♥ KJ4
♦ KJ87	♦ 109653
♣ K5	♣ AQ10

Table A

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

Table B

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

Another mixed bag of results on this board, let's have a look at two tables: -

Table A: So what did you open with this South Hand K at (1) in this week's quiz? It's 14 points with decent shape, but the three 10's are worth at least one point. The 5 card suit is short on honours but I would still open a strong NT because of the ♥ and ♣ tenaces. Anyway, 1♦ was the choice of everybody on Monday. 1♥ is correct at (2) but what do you do as North at (3)? Easy, isn't it? You want to play in 2♦ so bid it! That's how it should be, but not with some partners. 2♦ is a weak bid stating the final contract and South's 3♥ bid is inexcusable.

Table B: At least this South did not go leaping about! South should pass at (4).

And what happened? Both ♥ contracts failed and scored miserably. Other tables were in sensible ♦ partscores, making. Nobody opened 1NT and so nobody was in 3NT; with the ♠ KJ and singleton ♦ Q with West it would have made comfortably (those 10's are good cards!).

The bottom lines: -

- Count an extra point for 3 tens.
- It's often good to open 1NT holding a hand with tenaces.
- If you open a minor, partner bids a major and you bid 1NT then you have limited your hand to 12-14 points. If partner puts you back in your minor then that is to play. If you feel that your hand is too good to pass then perhaps you should have opened 1NT?
- Do not convert a 5-4 fit into a 4-3 fit!

Raising the pre-empt

Board 9 from Monday 27th

Dealer: ♠ A8
North ♥ 1098
E-W vul ♦ 10
♣ AJ107654

Table A

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

♠ KQ7	N	♠ J10964
♥ Q6	W E	♥ KJ43
♦ AKJ96543	S	♦ Q72
♣ -		♣ 2
	♠ 532	
	♥ A872	
	♦ 8	
	♣ KQ983	

Table B

West	North	East	South
-	3♣	pass	5♣ (1)
pass (2)	pass		

Table C

West	North	East	South
-	3♣	pass	5♣
5♦	6♣	pass	pass
6♦	pass	pass	dbl
pass	pass	pass	

Table A: Obviously South must bid at (1). This is a classic psyche situation and many scoundrels would bid 3♦ at (1). But not at this club! So we obviously raise the pre-empt; 4♣ is not enough and 5♣ looks right to me. The only other bid I would consider is 6♣ (The LAW)!

Table B: This South bid 5♣ and it was enough to buy the contract.

Table C: But this West was made of sterner stuff and bid 5♦ (and 6♦ when pushed!)

And what happened? Five tables and 5 different contracts: 4♦ +2, 5♣ -2, 5♦ +1, 6♣ -3 and 6♦ making.

The bottom lines: -

- Raise partner's pre-empt with 3 (or more) card support.

How many points to respond?

Board 18 from Monday 27th

Dealer: ♠ A109
East ♥ J85
N-S vul ♦ A62
♣ J982

♠ K32 N ♠ 876
♥ AQ62 W E ♥ 10974
♦ Q S ♦ J10875
♣ AK1074 ♣ 6
♠ QJ54
♥ K3
♦ K943
♣ Q53

Table A

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

Table B

West	North	East	South (H)
-	-	pass	pass
1♣	pass	pass	dbl (3)
2♣ (4)	all pass		

I am continually saying not to pass partner's 1♣ opening with a singleton ♣ if you can avoid it. One player took this advice to extremes on Monday, with excellent results: -

Table A: So what do you think of this 1♦ bid with just one point? I think it's a matter of percentages. 1♣, if passed out, is likely to be a lousy contract and any ♦, ♥ or ♠ contract will be far superior. Of course partner may leap off to 2NT or 3♣. Anyway, I'm not arguing with the bid although I expect most of you will. And it clearly worked out very well when the ♥ fit was uncovered. 2♥ at (2) is probably better than 1♥.

Table B: This East chose to pass. But what did you bid at (3) with Hand H in this week's quiz? You should pass, you have a flat hand and partner could not find a bid over 1♣ so West has a strong hand. This unwise double at (3) gave West the perfect opportunity at (4) to get to the top spot, quite why he chose to bid 2♣ rather than 1♥ is a mystery to me.

And what happened? 2♣ was minus two for the well deserved E-W bottom. 1♥ made +2 for the shared E-W top. One West somehow played in 2NT – I don't know the bidding but it must have been as bad as our West at Table B.

The bottom lines: -

- 4-4 fits play well.
- Do not pass partner's 1♣ opening if you have a reasonable bid (I will not argue if you say that 1♦ here is unreasonable).
- Do not bid in 4th seat over 1♣ with a mediocre balanced hand (LHO has a big hand).

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: Pass. Partner is a passed hand and you are under no obligation to rebid. Partner's surprising outing at the 3 level must surely be a six card suit and so you have excellent support. The only other vaguely sensible option is 4♣. 3♥ is terrible for a hand that does not even have opening values.
- Hand B: (a) 1NT. Normally you redouble in this situation, but with these ♠'s partner cannot have a penalty pass and so 1NT shows 18-19 points and good ♠'s.
(b) Pass. 2NT is too high and double would be for take-out.
- Hand C: 2♣, Stayman. Look for the 4-4 ♥ fit. Two players failed to do this on Monday and went down in a subsequent 3NT when there was a 4-4 ♥ fit.
- Hand D: Pass. Double would show ♣ shortage and a 1♠ overcall with this suit is horrible.
- Hand E: Pass. You want to double 2♥ for penalties but you cannot if you play negative doubles. So pass and await partner's 'automatic' re-opening double. If you do not play negative doubles then double here for penalties.
- Hand F: (a) 2♣. This hand is far too good for anything other than your strongest bid.
(b) If you play Benjamin twos then open with a game forcing 2♦.
- Hand G: 1NT. 1NT is 6-9 (poor 10) and a new suit, so 2♦ here, is 11 (good 10) +. With 10 points you have to evaluate. This hand is not so nice once partner has opened 1♠ (no support for partner) and I consider 2♦ to be an overbid.
- Hand H: Pass. It is rarely correct to balance over a 1♣ opening, partner has had loads of room to bid. With a flat hand it's best to pass. Opener may have a monster, partner does not.
- Hand J: (a) 2NT. This shows 18-19 points.
(b) 3♣. This is a tricky one. You have game forcing values after partner's 2 level response, so 2♠, 3♠, 2NT and 3♦ are all automatically ruled out (not forcing). 3NT or 4♠ are possible but too unilateral for me, so you have to 'manufacture' a bid. It's too dangerous to lie in a major (2♥ or 3♥) so that just leaves 3♣ by a process of elimination. Elementary my Dear Watson?
- Hand K: (a) 1NT. It's 14 points but three 10's are easily worth an extra point.
(b) Pass. You have said your hand and partner is setting the final contract.
- Hand L: (a) 3♥. The hand is not worth a game force (or slam investigation!) after a 1-level response from partner. 3♥ is strongly invitational and is fine.
(b) 4♠. But the hand is worth a game force after partner's 2-level bid and I would support partner's 5 card ♠ suit. 4♥ is not totally unreasonable. 3♥ or 3♠ are not sufficient as they are not forcing. You could bid 3♣/♦ (an artificial bid looking for ♥ support opposite) but why make it complicated when you know there is a 5-3 ♠ fit?
- Hand M: (a) 3♠. The hand is not worth a game force after a 1-level response from partner. You cannot mention the ♥ suit (if you wanted to) as 2♥ really is too feeble and 3♥ would be game forcing.
(b) 4♠. Similar to Hand L, it's now worth a game force after partner's 2-level bid and I would bid 4♠ rather than 3♥ because the ♠ suit is superb and the ♥'s are comparatively feeble. It's not often you see me denying a 4 card major, this is an exception.

Monday 4/10/2004

Friday 8/10/2004

1st Tonni/Bob 64%
 2nd Alex/Jeff 62%

1st Alex/Jeff 55.5%
 2nd Sheila/Gerry 55.4%

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

Hand A	Hand B	(a) What do you open with Hand A. (b) Suppose you choose 1♠, then what do you do after partner responds 1NT? This (b) answer is the same playing Standard American or Acol (weak NT).
♠ AK943	♠ AQ1092	
♥ K102	♥ 98	
♦ KQ5	♦ J9	
♣ 54	♣ KJ65	With Hand B you open 1♠ and partner responds 1NT. What do you do now?
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C RHO opens 1NT, what do you do?
♠ AJ53	♠ 75	
♥ A765	♥ J653	With Hand D partner opens 1NT so you bid 2♣. Partner replies 2♠, so what do you do?
♦ AQ7	♦ J732	
♣ 96	♣ AK3	
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E partner opens 1♠ and so you respond 1NT. Partner then bids 2♣, what do you do?
♠ 43	♠ KJ84	
♥ KQ6	♥ A10975	With Hand F you open 1♥. LHO bids 1♠, partner passes and RHO bid 2NT. What do you do?
♦ 108743	♦ A962	
♣ A73	♣ -	
Hand G	Hand H	With Hand G partner opens 1♠, what do you bid? What do you open with Hand H?
♠ AKQ9	♠ J10862	
♥ A85	♥ 102	
♦ 2	♦ AK6	
♣ 108762	♣ AKQ	

A number of people at the club seem to be confused about opener's 2NT rebid. I'll explain it with the quiz answers: -

How many points does the 2NT bid in these sequences show?

Sequence J 1♥ - 2♣ - 2NT ?
 Sequence K 1♥ - 1♠ - 2NT ?
 Sequence L 1♥ - 1NT - 2NT ?
 Sequence M 1♥ - 2♥ - 2NT ?

Way too high? – part 1

Board 26 from Monday 4th, both vul.

North (D)	South (A)
♠ 75	♠ AK943
♥ J653	♥ K102
♦ J732	♦ KQ5
♣ AK3	♣ 54

Table A

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

Table B

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

3NT was too high on this deal, lets have a look: -

Table A: So what did you open with Hand A in this week's quiz. A semi-balanced 15 count, so 1NT is certainly acceptable and would be the choice of many. However, my preference would be for 1♠ as the ♠ suit is excellent and the ♣'s are not.

Anyway, this South chose a perfectly respectable 1NT and North then obviously tries Stayman, but what did you bid with Hand D at (2) in this week's quiz?

A 9 count, so obviously 3NT? Maybe, but this is a very poor 9 count – no intermediates, a mis-fit for partner's major, both 4 card suits headed by a miserable jack and all the points in just a 3 card suit. I would not argue with a slightly pessimistic 2NT.

Table B: This South chose 1♠, fine. But what did you rebid at (3) with Hand A in this week's quiz? You should pass. This hand is nowhere near the 17-18 points required for 2NT (whatever system you play). 2♠ is a reasonable alternative but would normally be a 6 card suit.

And what happened? 3 pairs over-bid to 3NT (with one actually making). 2NT was two down at another table and just one pair stopped in the best contract of 1NT making +1.

The bottom lines: -

- The sequence 1x – 1NT – 2NT shows 17-18 points whether you play a strong or weak NT.
- An ill-fitting 24 points will not usually make 3NT. On this deal the tricks made were: 6, 7, 8(twice) and 9 just once. A 20% success rate if you're in 3NT.

Way too high – part 2

Board 16(8) from Friday 8th

Dealer: ♠ AQ10765
West ♥ KJ6
Love all ♦ Q108
♣ 4

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

♠ KJ84	N	♠ 9
♥ A10875	W E	♥ 32
♦ A962	S	♦ J4
♣ -		♣ Q10987632
	♠ 32	
	♥ Q94	
	♦ K753	
	♣ AKJ5	

Two West's went overboard on this deal: -

The best bid for East at (1) is a weak 3♣ jump shift – but it is only weak if that is what you have agreed! Since 2♣ is forcing it makes sense to me. Anyway, this pair had not agreed it and so East had to pass, not normally a problem. South's 2NT bid at (2) was natural showing a hand just like he had. Now then, what did you bid at (3) with Hand F in this week's quiz? It's a nice hand but West knows that East has nothing – North has overcalled and South has shown around 12-13 points. All the warning signs are there - West knows that the ♠'s are sitting over him and to venture into the 3 level with just 5-4 shape is asking for trouble. West should pass at (3).

And what happened? West got -800 points worth of trouble. It was similar at another table but declarer managed to scramble 6 tricks and so only went for 500. The other three table played in sensible ♠ partscores by N-S.

The bottom lines: -

- When your partner has shown nothing and the opponents clearly have the vast majority of the points, you need a *shapely* hand to venture forth at the 3 level.
- A 2NT response to an opening bid is 11-12 pts. But in response to a 1 level overcall you need more, say +- 13, as overcaller does not promise opening values.

Third Hand plays High

And just a word about the play. In the above deal North obviously led his singleton ♣. West won and led a ♠ which North won with the ♠10. North then needed to lead a ♥ to minimise ♠ ruffs on table. So he led the ♥6, which ♥ should South play?

With no high card in dummy it is automatic – 3rd player plays high. There is absolutely no way that playing the ♥9 can gain and it lost a trick for the defence.

The bottom line: -

- 3rd hand plays high unless there is a finessable honour in dummy on his right.

Who should bid?

Board 5 from Monday 4th

Dealer: ♠ K4
North ♥ KQ3
N-S vul ♦ 10865
 ♣ AKJ7

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

♠ 872	N	♠ AJ53
♥ J982	W E	♥ A765
♦ KJ432	S	♦ AQ7
♣ Q		♣ 96
	♠ Q1096	
	♥ 104	
	♦ 9	
	♣ 1086432	

I was asked to comment on this bidding, so here goes: -

(1) First of all, what should East do at (1)? What did you bid with Hand C in this week's quiz? The norm for doubling a 1NT opening is 15+ points but this hand is very marginal. It is nearly flat, has no intermediates and, very important, no good lead if you end up defending 1NT doubled. I prefer pass to double.

(2) A transfer to ♣'s. This pair play 4-way transfers and so this bid is not necessarily weak. It could easily be very strong and it is unlimited.

(3) Having already passed should you say something this go? It is again debatable. This time double would be for take-out and is very reasonable. Pass is perhaps a bit cautious but South is unlimited and you could go for a number if you bid.

(4) But here it's different. West now knows what is going on. South has now shown a weak hand with a long ♣ suit and a take-out double or a 3♦ bid are certainly sensible options. Now you may ask, why should the hand with 7 points bid when the hand with 15 did not?

The answer is that it's all about position at the table. West is in the pass-out (or balancing) seat. Because N-S have subsided in a part-score he knows that partner must have values.

And what happened? 3♣ made +1 for a clear top to N-S. The other results were all over the place but the best E-W score was 3♥ making; nice one David/Kenneth – how did you bid it?

And what would I have done? I think that all of the decisions at (1), (2) and (3) are very borderline and certainly would not argue if you disagree. But I would pass at (1). At this vulnerability I would double at (2). And the vulnerability would again encourage me to bid at (3) and I would double as partner is unlikely to bid ♠'s (with his known values he would have bid already with a 5 card ♠ suit), but 3♦ is equally good at (3).

The bottom lines: -

- You need a decent 15+ points to double a 1NT opening. A good suit to lead (preferably a 5 card suit) is useful. If you don't have a good lead then don't double with a borderline hand.
- Be aware of the vulnerability. Bidding at (2) or (3) above is much safer when non-vul.
- Know about balancing. You generally only need about 6-7 points to bid in the pass-out seat if you know that partner has values. Partner, of course, must realise that you are bidding his points and should not raise (so East would pass a 3♦ bid here).

28 points enough for slam?

Board 21 from Monday 4th, N-S vul.

West (G)	East (H)
♠ AKQ9	♠ J10862
♥ A85	♥ 102
♦ 2	♦ AK6
♣ 108762	♣ AKQ

Table A

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

Table B

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

An easy slam missed, who's fault?

Table A: What did you open with Hand H in this week's quiz? 1NT is not ideal but I like it for the reasons that I state week after week – no decent rebid if you open 1♠. Now what should West do at (2)? 13 points opposite partner's 15-17 is not enough for 6NT – but it is probably enough for 6♠ with the known fit. That singleton ♦ may be great, but opposite say ♦KQx it is not. So what is the best way for West to establish if slam is a possibility and inform partner about his singleton ♦? There's only one way – splinter! There are options for splinters after Stayman and it's all in the book that I talked about last week. Anyway, a splinter here and 6♠ is easily found. If you do not play splinters after Stayman (it is not standard) then I would ask for aces at (2) – it's too good to sign off in 4♠.

Table B: This East chose to open 1♠, OK. What did you bid with Hand G at (3) in this week's quiz? West's 2♣ is correct if you don't play splinters. Now East has the rebid problem that I mentioned above. 2♠ is a bit feeble, 3♠ overstates both the length and strength of the ♠ suit, 2NT is 12-14, 3NT is 18-19. There is no good bid (that's why I opened 1NT). Anyway, I guess that 3♠ is as good (or bad) a choice as any. West should of course look for slam.

And what happened? The board was played in 4♠ 6 times and 13 tricks were easy. Only one pair bid 6♠ (good show Alex Jeff) – but then there is no way that Jeff would not bid slam whichever seat he was sitting in!

And how should the hand be bid to 6♠? Assuming you open 1♠ then it could go: -

West	East	
-	1♠	There are obviously numerous other routes. I would splinter with 4♦ at (a) but then East has a slight problem as he is interested in 6♠ but does not want to bid Blackwood at (b) because of possibly two ♥ losers off the top (remember that hand last week with ♥AK losers off the top?). So East's best bid at (b) is a 5♣ cue bid, showing the ♣A and slam interest. 5♥ at (c) shows the ♥A and East can bid the slam. However, it costs nothing to cue bid the ♦A at (d) in case West is interested in the grand.
4♦ (a)	5♣ (b)	
5♥ (c)	6♦ (d)	
6♠	pass	

The bottom lines: - Splinters really work. Splinters after Stayman has found a fit are rather more complicated so it's best to read the chapter in the book I recommended last week.

If partner doesn't like 1NT, he won't like 2NT Board 6(14) from Friday 8th, love all.

North (B) South (E)

♠ AQ1092 ♠ 43
 ♥ 98 ♥ KQ6
 ♦ J9 ♦ 108743
 ♣ KJ65 ♣ A73

Table A

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

Table C

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

Table B

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

3 different results here and only one is right, let's have a look: -

Table A: So what did you bid at (1) with Hand B in this week's quiz? I don't like this pass of 1NT...

Table B: After partner's 1NT response you know that it's partscore deal, with these two poor doubletons it must surely be best to play in either 2♠ or 2♣. So you bid 2♣ at (1) which partner will usually either pass or correct to 2♣.

And what did you bid with Hand E at (2) in this week's quiz? Partner's 2♣ bid states that he does not like 1NT and requests that you give preference by either passing 2♣ or bidding 2♠. A 2♠ bid here promises no more than a small doubleton ♠. Even a 5-2 ♠ fit should play better than 1NT. Unfortunately this South chose to ignore North's message that 1NT would not play well and bid 2NT at (2).

Table C: This table got it 100% right. North should bid 2♣ at (1) and South should give preference to the known 5-2 ♠ fit by bidding 2♠ at (2).

And what happened? The good Table C sequence was bid at two tables and they both made 2♠ to share the top score. The poor Table A sequence was bid at two tables and they both went minus one to share a poor score. The silly 2NT contract at Table B went two down and got it's deserved cold zero.

The bottom lines: -

- With a 5 card suit and a lower ranking 4 card suit, it's usually best to remove partner's 1NT response to two of your 4 card suit.
- If partner doesn't like 1NT, then don't bid 2NT!
- In a sequence like 1♠ - 1NT - 2♣ you should pass with 4 card ♣ support or else give preference to 2♠ with a doubleton ♠. The only other option is that you can bid a reasonable 6 suit of your own, you *never* bid 2NT.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: (a) Either 1♠ or 1NT are acceptable. I prefer 1♠ because of the good ♠'s and poor ♣'s and the fact that you have no serious rebid problem - after a 2 level response you force to game and after 1NT you
(b) ... pass. You need 17-18 points to invite with 2NT here. Remember, partner may have a little as 6 points. 2♠ is a reasonable alternative.
- Hand B: 2♣. This is a weak bid showing 5 ♠'s and 4 or 5 ♣'s. It tells partner that you do not like NT and he should normally pass or bid 2♠.
- Hand C: Pass. This is a close decision between pass and double (for penalties, 15+ pts). With this flattish hand with no intermediates and no good lead I would pass.
- Hand D: 2NT or 3NT. It's borderline, 9 points should normally go but this is a miserable mis-fitting 9 points and a cautious 2NT would have worked better on the day.
- Hand E: 2♠. Partner has said that he has the black suits and that he does not like 1NT. So heed what he says and let him play in the 5-2 ♠ fit.
- Hand F: Pass. Partner is bust and if you bid you will be doubled and concede a huge penalty.
- Hand G: 4♦. A splinter agreeing ♠'s, showing ♦ shortage and looking for slam. Perfect. If you do not play splinters (why not?) then the hand is too strong for a direct 4♠ and so 2♣ is best. You should not bid a Jacoby 2NT with this type of hand but prefer to splinter (Jacoby is more balanced and asks partner for shortage).
- Hand H: 1NT or 1♠? Either is acceptable but I prefer 1NT for the usual reason – if you open 1♠ the you have no good rebid. Suppose you open 1♠ and partner bids 2♣, what do you do? 2NT is 12-14, 3NT is 18-19, 2♠ shows a weakish hand with 6 ♠'s and 3♠ shows this sort of strength but with much better/longer ♠'s.

Opener's 2NT rebid

Playing Standard American an opening 1NT is 15-17, so a NT rebid is always a different range.

Sequence J: Here 2NT is the cheapest possible rebid in NT, so it's 12-14.

Sequence K: Here 2NT is a jump. 1NT would have been 12-14 so 2NT is 18-19.

Playing Acol (weak NT) it's different. Sequence J is then 15-16 and Sequence K is 17-19.

Sequences L and M are totally different as responder has a weak hand of about 6-9 points and opener does not have to bid (he can pass). Thus the 2NT here is an invitational bid and should be about 17-18 points. This is true if you play Standard American or Acol as it is independent of your opening 1NT range.



Monday 11/10/2004

Friday 15/10/2004

1st Alex/Jeff 67%
2nd John/Willy 60%

1st Clive/Ken 71%
2nd Paul/Terry 64%

Bidding Quiz

Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.

Hand A

With Hand A partner opens 1♥ then (a) what do you respond?
Suppose you choose 1♠, then the bidding proceeds as follows: -

♠ KQ108543
♥ KQ
♦ KQJ
♣ 7

↓ You
1♥ pass 1♠ 2♣
2♥ 3♣ ??

- (b) What do you bid at ??
- (c) What would you bid if there was no 3♣ bid?

Hand B

(a) What, if anything, do you open with Hand B?
(b) Suppose you choose to open 1♥ and the bidding goes: -

♠ AJ
♥ J109654
♦ 953
♣ A4

↓ You
1♥ pass 1♠ 2♣
2♥ 3♣ 3♠ pass
??

- (b) What do you do at ??

Hand C

Hand D

With Hand C partner opens 1NT, what do you do?

♠ AJ84
♥ Q10654
♦ 3
♣ 643

♠ 732
♥ A3
♦ AKQ1072
♣ A9

- (a) What do you open with Hand D?
- (b) Suppose you open 1♦ and partner bids 1♥, what do you do?

Hand E

Hand F

With Hand E partner opens 1NT, what do you do?

♠ A963
♥ 10752
♦ J63
♣ Q7

♠ AQ853
♥ KJ7
♦ Q
♣ AKQ10

With Hand F partner opens 1NT, what do you do?

Hand G

Hand H

(a) What do you open with Hand G?
(b) Suppose you open 1♠ and partner bids 1NT, what now?

♠ AJ9632
♥ AQ53
♦ K
♣ AK

♠ QJ4
♥ AK8642
♦ A7
♣ 92

With Hand H partner opens 1♦. (a) what do you respond?
(b) Suppose you chose 1♥, then what do you bid after partner's 1♠ rebid?

Hand J

Hand K

With Hand J partner opens 1♣ and you respond 1♠. Partner then bids 1NT (12-14), what do you do?

♠ A843
♥ 864
♦ J87
♣ AQ8

♠ AK
♥ 53
♦ K87652
♣ K94

With Hand K you open 1♦ and partner bids 1♠. RHO then overcalls 2♥, what do you bid?

Unauthorised Information

Board 15 from Monday 11th

Dealer: ♠ 72
South ♥ A72
N-S vul ♦ A876
♣ QJ93

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

♠ AJ N ♠ KQ108543
♥ J109654 W E ♥ KQ
♦ 953 S ♦ KQJ
♣ A4 ♣ 7

♠ 96

♥ 83

♦ 1042

♣ K108652

This hand caused some controversy on Monday,
I'll explain what happened: -

Did you open this West Hand B(a) at (1) in this week's quiz? It's a very poor but acceptable opener, I prefer pass or 2♥. Anyway, West opened and partner responded 1♠. If you play strong jump responses - it's standard and most people do, then I would bid 2♠ at (2) with this East hand. Anyway, East chose 1♠ and South ventured forth with a 2♣ bid which some people (including me) would consider to be about six or seven points light, especially vulnerable! West then bid 2♥, reasonable, and North obviously supported South's ♣'s.

Now came the irregularity. East placed the stop card on the table at (4), followed by the 3♠ card. Now this is not a jump (East did not see the 3♣ bid). When dummy appeared the N-S pair called the director, claiming that West would not have bid 4♠, but pass, without the knowledge that partner had intended to jump. What would your ruling be?

There are a few points. South's 2♣ bid is ludicrous of course and prompted North to make the unwise double, but that does not affect the following. Let's start with the rules. East's playing of the stop card implied that he intended to jump to 3♠, showing more than just competitive values. Partner (West) is not allowed to take advantage of this unauthorised information and must bid as if there was no stop card. West claims that he had a nice hand and that he would have bid 4♠ anyway. Maybe, maybe not; who knows? But in a situation like this the director has to determine if the clear majority of players of West's standard would bid 4♠. The answer is clearly 'no' (I actually asked three players – Alex, Clive and Ken and they all said that they would pass at (5), as would I). So clearly the 4♠ bid cannot be allowed to stand and so I adjusted the score to 3♠ undoubled, making 11 tricks.

The bottom lines: -

- You are not allowed to take advantage of unauthorised information. Typical examples are a hesitation by partner or partner's explanation of questions. You should only bid in such situations if it is *very* clear-cut, and by 'very' we mean that 75% would make the same bid. Clearly nowhere near 75% would bid at (5) and so West is obliged to pass.
- But, actually, even if there was no 3♣ bid, 3♠ at (4) is a very poor bid. East has game forcing values and so has to make a game forcing bid at (4). With no 3♣ bid, 3♠ would only be invitational. Since he did not make a game forcing 2♠ jump at (2) East has to force now; 4♥, 4♠ or 4♣ (let partner choose) are the sensible choices at (4).
- In most auctions, a bid of partner's suit or a re-bid of your own suit, even if jumps, are no more than invitational.
- A two level overcall should be close to an opening bid, especially when vulnerable.

Rebidding a suit is not forcing

Board 11 from Friday 15th, love all.

Let's continue with one of the points I mentioned just now: -

West	East (H)	West	North	East	South
		-	-	-	pass
♠ K1062	♠ QJ4	1♦	pass	1♥ (1)	pass
♥ J	♥ AK8642	1♠	pass	3♥ (2)	pass
♦ KQ1054	♦ A7	3NT (3)	all pass		
♣ A105	♣ 92				

Just about all routes lead to the best (3NT) contract, but this auction is instructive: -

(1) So what did you bid with Hand H(a) in this week's quiz? The simplest approach is to respond with a game forcing 2♥; but this pair had agreed that 2♥ here is weak (this is a popular treatment but is not standard).

(2) O.K. So E-W play weak jump shifts and so East could not force at (1); so what should he do at (2)? What did you do with Hand H(b) in this week's quiz? 3♥ is not good enough because, although strong, it is not game forcing but just highly invitational. East must be able to show game forcing values and also his great ♥ suit and the way to do that is to bid the 4th suit first and then bid ♥'s.

(3) As it happens West has an obvious 3NT bid anyway so the slip did not cost.

And what happened? 3NT was bid 4 out of 5 times. Making 8, 9(twice) or 10 tricks. 4♥ was bid at the 5th table but went two down.

The bottom lines: -

- In most auctions, a bid of partner's suit or a re-bid of your own suit, even if jumps, are no more than invitational.
- In Standard American, a jump shift shows a good suit and is game forcing.
- Many more advanced players prefer to play the jump shift as weak
- but then you have to know how to show a game forcing hand (often via 4th suit).
- Every pair play 4th suit forcing differently, but a good simple option is to say that it is game forcing. This often makes life simple, especially if you do not play strong jump shifts.

Does opener always need to rebid?

Board 18 from Friday 15th

Dealer: ♠ J86
East ♥ A109742
N-S vul ♦ 43
♣ Q3

♠ Q9543	N	♠ AK
♥ KJ6	W E	♥ 53
♦ -	S	♦ K87652
♣ J10876		♣ K94

♠ 1072
♥ Q8
♦ AQJ109
♣ A52

Table A

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

Table B

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

Table A: Contrast this 2 level overcall at (1) with the 2♣ bid of two pages back; this North hand is the minimum for a vulnerable 2 level overcall – many would say it's not good enough and I certainly would not argue. But what did you bid at (2) with Hand K in this week's quiz? You should pass. When RHO intervened you do not have to rebid as partner gets another shot. A bid in this situation says that you have something to say and 3♦ would show a good suit, unfortunately this suit is not good and the hand has insufficient values to venture forth at the 3 level opposite a possible 6 points from partner. This double at (3) is penalties – opponents have no fit, partner has shown values and this hand is sitting over the bidder.

Table B: This North chose to pass at (1) and I would not argue. So now East has to bid at (4) and 2♦ is fine. South cannot double at (5) for penalties – it would be for take-out (♥'s and ♣'s) as partner has not bid. But I would not pass with this North hand at (6), in the pass-out seat 2♥ is perfectly safe.

And what happened? 3♦ doubled went down 4 for 800 away. Two pairs were allowed to play in 2♦ losing 100 or 300 (I don't know how 2♦ got doubled at one table for penalties). One West played in 3NT doubled, minus 300; and one E-W stopped in 2♠.

The bottom lines: -

- With a minimal opener you do not need to rebid if RHO interferes.
- If opener rebids at the 3 level then that shows a strong hand (about 16+).
- In the pass-out (balancing) seat it's OK to bid with less values than normal.

Points for Stayman?

Board 9 from Monday 11th, E-W vul.

More than one player seems to be confused by the points requirement for bidding Stayman and transfers. Basically, neither promise any points unless followed by a constructive bid.

		<u>Table A</u>			
North (E)	South	West	North	East	South
		-	pass	pass	1NT
♠ A963	♠ 752	pass	2♣ (1)	pass	2♦
♥ 10752	♥ AQ9	pass	2NT (2)	pass	3NT
♦ J63	♦ AQ5	all pass			
♣ Q7	♣ AJ106				

				<u>Table B</u>			
<u>Table C</u>				West	North	East	South
West	North	East	South	-	pass	pass	1NT
-	pass	pass	1NT	pass	2♣ (1)	pass	2♦
pass	pass (1)	pass		pass	2♥ (2)	all pass	

Just two pairs managed to play in the correct (1NT) contract here: -

Table A: So what did you bid with Hand E at (1) in this week's quiz? Pass I hope.

It's time to explain Garbage Stayman again. Most people play that Stayman does not have any points requirement – but that is only if you can handle any 2♦/♥/♠ response. Here North would have happily passed a 2♥/♠ response but he cannot cope with 2♦. There is no way out now, 2NT at (2) is invitational, promising 8-9 points and South obviously accepts.

Table B: This North again made the unsound Stayman bid but then chose the lie about his ♥ length at (2) – this 2♥ bid shows a weak hand but promises 4♠'s and 5♥'s.

Table C: This North got it right.

And what happened. The board was played 6 times. Three pairs bid as Table A and all went one down to deservedly share the bottom. The equally silly 2♥ contract fared a little better. 1NT easily made 8 tricks, an easy way to score a top.

The bottom lines: -

- If partner bids Stayman then opener has only 3 possible bids: 2♦, 2♥ or 2♠. No other bid is allowed, regardless of how good your hand is. Responder is the Captain and he may have zero points.
- There are just two cases when you can bid Stayman with less than 8 points: -
 - (a) 4441 type shape (short ♣'s), when you will pass any response
 - (b) 5-4 or 4-5 in the majors, when you will pass 2♥/♠ and convert 2♦ into the 5-carder.

And after a transfer it's similar

- After a 2♦/♥ transfer then opener is allowed to break the transfer with a max *and* 4 trumps, but he must never bid above 3 of the major.
- Inexperienced players are better off always simply completing the transfer regardless.

Play quiz

Answer overleaf.

DUMMY



♠ A843	Dealer:	West	North	East	South
♥ 864	North	-	-	-	1♣
♦ J87	Both vul	pass	1♠	pass	1NT
♣ AQ8		pass	2NT	pass	3NT
		all pass			
N	♠ 975				
W E	♥ KQ10				
S	♦ AQ5 ← YOU				
	♣ K1042_				

You are East, defending 3NT. Partner leads the ♦10, if dummy plays low then so should you, to 'finesse' the ♦J. But here dummy played the ♦J. You obviously (I hope – 3rd player plays high) play the ♦A, but what card do you lead at trick two?

Bid 1NT or support partner's minor? – part 1 Board 2 from Friday 15th, N-S vul.

There was a (slight) difference of opinion on this deal: -

West	East	<u>Table A</u>			
		West	North(me)	East	South
♠ 105	♠ KQ84	-	-	1♦	pass
♥ 75	♥ A1096	2♦ (1)	all pass		
♦ A643	♦ KQ9				
♣ QJ984	♣ 52	<u>Table B</u>			
		West	North	East	South
		-	-	1♦	pass
		1NT (1)	all pass_		

So, should you support partner's ♦'s at (1) or bid 1NT? This is a problem when playing better minor – opener may have a 3 card suit. Others at the table said that West should bid 1NT; I'm not convinced and defended West's choice, 2♦ will work out better if partner has 4 or 5 ♦'s. Anyway, this is an insoluble problem playing better minor and it's one reason why I prefer the prepared ♣ variation of Standard American (then a 1♦ opening is always 4+cards).

And what happened? Obviously 1NT would have been better on this occasion.

And what contract would I have been in if I was East?

Why, 1NT of course. How?

I would open the East hand with 1NT. KQ combinations are good, a 10,9 combination in a 4 card suit is good. I consider this East hand good enough for a strong 1NT opener.

The bottom line: -

- It really is a toss up with 2245 shape and 6-9 points if you bid 2♦ or 1NT over partner's 1♦ opening.
- You can reduce this problem by always opening 1♣ when 3-3 in the minors.

Bid 1NT or support partner's minor? – part 2 Board 8 from Friday 15th, love all.

This time I held the responding hand with a 4 card ♦ suit (East) in a similar situation: -

West	East	<u>Table A</u>			
		West	North	East	South
♠ AK87	♠ Q65	1♦	pass	1NT (1)	2♠
♥ KJ107	♥ 9	2NT (2)	pass	3NT	all pass
♦ QJ98	♦ A742				
♣ K	♣ Q10764				

<u>Table B</u>			
West	North	East(me)	South
1♦	pass	2♦ (1)	2♠
2NT (3)	pass	3NT	all pass

<u>Table C</u>			
West	North	East	South
1♦	pass	2♦ (1)	2♠
3♦ (3)	all pass		

Table A: This East chose to respond 1NT at (1). West's raise to 2NT at (2) is correct, it shows 17-18 points. The ♣K should be downgraded but this is more than compensated for by the excellent intermediates.

Table B: I chose 2♦ at (1) (because of the singleton) but it's much the same, with West's 2NT again showing 17-18 pts.

Table C: But it went wrong at this table. As I said, I prefer 2♦ to 1NT at (1) and so it's West's 3♦ that is at fault. Even if you play this as encouraging it is nowhere near good enough. West has the ♠'s stopped and should bid 2NT. He should not worry about the ♣'s. If you open 1♦ and partner replies either 1NT or 2♦ then he has denied a 4 card major and probably has ♣'s.

And what happened? Two pairs ended up in 3♦, making. The other 3 tables all found the good 3NT.

The bottom lines: -

- You should not open 1NT with a singleton, but a NT rebid is acceptable if you have reason to believe that partner has the suit .
- If you open 1♦ and partner responds 1NT or 2♦, then he probably has ♣'s.
- If you open 1♦ and partner responds 1NT or 2♦ then he is limited to 6-9 points and you are not obliged to bid. A 2NT bid here is 17-18 points.
- If you play better minor and partner opens 1♦ then you sometimes have a problem with a hand that is 2245, 1345 or 3145 (♠♥♦♣ order). With insufficient values to bid 2♣ you have to choose between 1NT or 2♦. Either could work out best but I normally support ♦'s with a singleton major.
- The above dilemma does not exist if you play a prepared ♣. If partner opens 1♦ then it's a 4 card suit and if he opens 1♣ then you can always bid 1♦.
- And this problem is another reason why I always open 1♣ when 3-3 in the minors. A 1♣ opening never gives responder a headache, whereas 1♦ may do – I don't carry Aspirins around and so am always considerate to my partner.

Worth a 2NT invitation?

Board 7 from Friday 15th

Dealer: ♠ A843
South ♥ 864
both vul ♦ J87
 ♣ AQ8

♠ 1062	N	♠ 975
♥ J95	W E	♥ KQ10
♦ 109643	S	♦ AQ5
♣ 96		♣ K1042
	♠ KQJ	
	♥ A732	
	♦ K2	
	♣ J753	

West	North (J)	East(me)	South
-	-	-	1♣
pass	1♠	pass (1)	1NT
pass	2NT (2)	pass	3NT
all pass			

So what did you bid at (2) with the North Hand J in this week's quiz? Partner is 12-14 so invite with this 11 count? That's what just about everybody did on Friday. I was East and when dummy came down I said that I would have passed 1NT because I would subtract a point for the flat 4333 shape and also the hand has no 9's or 10's. North (Alex) replied that he would have passed if he was playing with me, but Jeff would expect him to bid (Jeff confirmed this). I can only infer that Jeff is a better declarer player than me?

Anyway, even with a combined 25 count 3NT is not a good contract (because the North hand is totally flat!). So West led the ♦10 and dummy played the ♦J. What did you play in the quiz on page 6? I was East and Alex and myself were having our usual friendly chat during the play. I rose with the ♦A and immediately returned the ♦Q. I commented that people would not like to partner with me if I blocked their suits and Alex speculated that it was obviously a doubleton!

I later got in with the ♣K and discovered the ♦5 mixed in with my ♥'s? So down went the contract.

And what happened? 4 out of the 5 tables reached the miserable 3NT. Just one made, presumably that East did not unblock? Even so, it's difficult to see where South can get his 9th trick.

The bottom lines: -

- Deduct a point for 4333 type shape.
- Even 25 points is not enough for 3NT with two flat hands. Note that 3NT is a miserable contract here however the opposition cards are divided.
- Be aware of unblocking.
- Notice the pass at (1). It is unwise to bid here with a flat hand as you know that partner has very little.

Play quiz answer

You win with the ♦A and should play the ♦Q next. Partner's lead indicates the ♦9 and you know from the bidding that he has no points and so no other entry; it is imperative to unblock so that you can get him in later with the ♦5 to his ♦9 to cash his ♦'s.

Incidentally, South would do better to play a low ♦ from dummy as the suit is then always blocked.

Stayman or Transfer?

Board 21 from Monday 11th, N-S vul.

West (C) East (D)

♠ AJ84 ♠ 732
♥ Q10654 ♥ A3
♦ 3 ♦ AKQ1072
♣ 643 ♣ A9

Table A

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

Table B

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

Three out of the 6 tables found 3NT on Monday, these two did not: -

Table A: So what did you open with Hand D(a) in this week's quiz? Now I am not adverse to opening 1NT with a 6 card minor and I think that it would be reasonable with this East hand if it had a couple less points, but this hand is way too strong. I say it week after week, hand evaluation is not just counting points. A 6 card suit headed by the AKQ is worth far more than 9 points. So I would open 1♦ with a view to rebidding 3NT.

Anyway, this East opened 1NT but what should West bid? What did you bid with Hand C at (2) in this week's quiz? This is another 'Garbage Stayman' situation. When weak with 5-4 or 4-5 in the majors it's best to bid Stayman and then pass a 2♥/♠ response or convert 2♦ into your 5 carder.

Since East has 8 tricks in his hand, passing 2♦ at (3) is certainly a safe contract!

Table B: The correct opening, but what did you bid with Hand D(b) at (4) in this week's quiz? This hand has 17 'points' but it's worth much more. 3♦ would be the choice of many and is not unreasonable. 2NT shows 18-19 points and is again not unreasonable. But I prefer 3NT, all partner needs is a ♠ stop for it to roll home.

And what happened? 3NT was bid at 3 tables and it rolled home (+1 once). The other 3 tables all ended up in 2♦. The bottom lines: -

- AKQxxx is worth much more than 9 points
- With 5-4 or 4-5 in the majors, bid Stayman rather than transferring over partner's 1NT.
- The sequences 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥ and 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♠ are weak.
- A double jump rebid of 3NT shows a good hand with a long solid minor.

Counting Points

Board 1 from Monday 11th, love all.

West (F) East

♠ AQ853 ♠ K1074
♥ KJ7 ♥ A85
♦ Q ♦ AK76
♣ AKQ10 ♣ J8

West	North	East	South
-	pass	1NT	pass
4♣	pass	4♠	pass
7NT	all pass		

After a 1NT opening it's best to play 4♣ as the ace ask with 4NT as quantitative.

And what happened? This bidding (or something similar) was that of just two of the six tables on Monday. Others played in 7♠, 6NT, 6♠ or even 3NT with 14 cold tricks. Poor show. The bottom line. 36 points is enough for 7NT if there's no ace missing.

A big hand – but how big?

Board 11 from Monday 11th

Dealer: ♠ -
South ♥ KJ104
Love all ♦ J1096
♣ Q9763

♠ AJ9632 N ♠ 108
♥ AQ53 W E ♥ 9876
♦ K S ♦ AQ852
♣ AK ♣ 84
♠ KQ754
♥ 2
♦ 743
♣ J1052

Table E

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

So, final contracts varying from
1♠ to 5♠, let's have a look: -

Table A

West(G)	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
1♠ (1)	pass	pass (2)	pass

Table B

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

Table C

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

Table D

West(G)	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
2♣ (1)	pass	2♦	pass
2♠ (3)	pass	pass (4)	pass

Table A: What did you open with this West Hand G(a) in this week's quiz at (1)? It's a strong hand but not worth 2♣. Actually it's about 8½ playing tricks and so worth a strong 2♠ if that's what you play. Anyway, 1♠ is the bid in Standard American.

Pass at (2) is silly of course, I guess East was sleeping?

Table B: This East correctly bid 1NT and so what did you rebid with Hand G(b) at (3) in this week's quiz? The hand is worth game after partner has responded and so 2♥, 2♠ and 3♠ are all not good enough. So you have to bid either 3♥ or 4♠; but should you bid the 4 card ♥ suit or a 6 card ♠ suit? Remember this Hand M from news-sheet 100 – (♠ AKQJ652 ♥ Q863 ♦ - ♣ K6)? In a similar situation I said that I would rebid the good 6 card ♠ suit rather than the poor ♥ suit. But here the ♥ suit is very respectable and I would rebid 3♥ (game forcing). And what do you think of the double at (4)? I would not double as it may help declarer.

Table C: This pair (Kenneth/David) go it spot on.

Table D: I'm not sure if this pair play Benjamin or not; I assume so. In that case the first 3 bids are fine but East is *far* too good to pass at (4) – it's forcing in Standard.

Table E: West was somewhat inconsistent here. He correctly opened a strong two at (1) and 3♠ at (5) is reasonable (although 3♥ is better). 4♠ by East is simply setting the final contract and West has no reason to think that East has any more than he has. Remember, a strong two is a limit bid and defines the hand as 8-9 playing tricks; so responder is the Captain in ascertaining how high to go.

And what happened? 4♥ made exactly. The ♠ contracts made either 8,9 or 10 tricks. I note that the only West to make 4♠ was the one who was doubled – the double helped declarer!

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: (a) 2♠. In Standard American the jump shift is game forcing and promises a good suit like this. Subsequent bidding is then easy as everything is forcing to game.
(b) 4♠, 4♥ or 4♣. You have game forcing values and so either have to bid game or make a forcing bid. 3♠ here is just competitive and is woefully inadequate.
(c) 4♠, 4♥ or 3♣. Again, you have to force to game. This time a jump to 3♠ would be invitational but is a poor bid because you easily have game values.
- Hand B: (a) 1♥, 2♥ or pass? I guess that all are reasonable? A 1♥ opening does not conform to the rule of 20 and, with the aces in doubletons it is a very poor opener in my view. Either pass or 2♥ are best.
(b) Pass. Clear-cut. Partner's 3♠ bid is merely competitive and this was a sub-standard opener.
- Hand C: 2♣. With a weak hand 5-4 or 4-5 in the majors, bid Stayman and convert a 2♦ response into 2 of your 5-carder. This is a weak bid which partner will pass.
With this particular hand I would bid Stayman and convert 2♦ into 2♥; but if partner replied in a major then I would invite game (with 3♥/♠) in that major as there is a fit and this hand is then worth an invitation.
- Hand D: (a) 1♦. It's too good for 1NT if you even thought of it.
(b) 3NT. A good hand with solid ♦'s. 2NT or 3♦ are reasonable alternatives.
- Hand E: Pass. You cannot bid Stayman because you have no recourse if partner bids 2♦.
- Hand F: Count! You have 21 points opposite partner 15 min. That's 36 minimum, so check that there is no ace missing and then bid 7NT. Four players out of six failed to do this on Monday! Note that I prefer 4♣ as the ace ask here, with 4NT as an invitational (quantitative) raise.
- Hand G: (a) 1♠. It's not good enough for 2♣. If you play strong twos (or Benjamin) then it's worth 2♠ (2♣ followed by 2♠ playing Benjamin).
A 2NT opening is acceptable with a singleton king (or ace) – but not with ten cards in the majors.
(b) 3♥. Game forcing. You cannot bid 2♥, 2♠ or 3♠ as you want to force to game. It's better to show this decent ♥ suit rather than showing 6 ♠'s by rebidding 4♠.
- Hand H: (a) 2♥. A strong jump shift, showing a good suit and game forcing.
(b) 2♣. Since you did not force to game last bid you have to do so now. 3♥ would be highly invitational but not forcing. As usual in these situation you have to invoke the 4th suit to set up a game forcing sequence. So 2♣ now and then 3♥ over partner's expected 2♦ or 2♠ or 2NT is then forcing. Of course it's much simpler if you play strong jump shifts and bid 2♥ at (a).
- Hand J: Pass. It's 11 points, but then you have to deduct a point for the totally flat shape, and the lack of 9's and 10's is also an ill-omen.
- Hand K: Pass. When RHO interferes you are no longer under any obligation to find a rebid. In fact, to bid shows extras. A 3♦ bid here would show a much stronger hand (and a better suit).

Monday 18/10/2004

Friday 22/10/2004

1st Jerry/Paul 71%
 2nd Martin/Rosemary 54%

1st Alex/Jeff 57%
 2nd Clive/Ken 54%

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

Hand A	Hand B	What do you open with Hand A?
♠ KQ743	♠ 10	With Hand B partner opens 1♣, what do you respond?
♥ AKQJ	♥ KQ107543	
♦ AJ102	♦ 7	
♣ -	♣ 10975	
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C LHO opens 2♥ and partner doubles, what do you bid?
♠ KQ8632	♠ 854	
♥ 7	♥ AKJ10	With Hand D LHO opens 1♣ and partner doubles, what do you bid?
♦ Q63	♦ 6543	
♣ 762	♣ 93	
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E RHO opens 1♣, LHO bids 1♥ and partner doubles (a) What do you bid? (b) What would you do if RHO now bids 1♠?
♠ Q965	♠ AQJ7	
♥ J82	♥ AK95	
♦ 98632	♦ 92	With hand F you open 1♣ and partner responds 1♥. What do you bid?
♣ 3	♣ A103	

It's time to re-state a few rules, regulations etc:**Dress Code**

Short-sleeved (vest-type) T-shirts are unacceptable. Would it be too much to ask that people actually wear a shirt? I note that Jeff has a very impressive shirt that he keeps for the exclusive use at the bridge club. Perhaps others could follow his fine example?

Alerts

There were a couple of problems on Friday. Now I do like to keep things simple and the rules keep changing anyway. At our club we follow the principle that anything that is 'standard' does not need to be alerted. So Stayman and transfers need not be alerted.

But there are a few greyer areas. The modern trend is for weak jump overcalls and they are now 'standard' and do not need to be alerted; thus intermediate or strong jumps overcalls do need an alert. And what about jump shifts? – say partner opens 1♣ and you jump to 2♥. Is this a weak or strong bid? 'Standard' is that it is strong (good suit, game forcing); but many pairs play this as (very) weak, but if weak it needs to be alerted as that is not standard.

In the USA a weak NT need to be alerted. In the UK a strong NT needs to be alerted. So at our club? Neither needs to be alerted; one can alert or announce if you wish, or even fill out a convention card? As far as I am concerned, if you don't know what the opponents play then ask. Perhaps easiest is the Alex approach of always asking about everything – but then I guess that that slows things down and you may always finish each round last?

Slam played in 1♠ - twice!

Board 14 from Monday 18th, love all.

With 11 solid tricks and slam on a finesse, only one of the 6 tables even got to game on this board from Monday: -

West (A)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ KQ743	♠ J62	-	-	pass	pass
♥ AKQJ	♥ 762	1♠ (1)	pass	pass	pass
♦ AJ102	♦ K543				
♣ -	♣ 862				

So what did you open with Hand A at (1) in this week’s quiz? It’s 20 points, but that is not as important as it’s playing strength. There are 3-3½ in ♠’s, 4 in ♥’s and 2-2½ in ♦’s; that’s about 9-10. If you play strong twos (or Benjamin) then a strong 2♠ is fine, although a game forcing 2♣ (2♦ playing Benjamin) may be better.

Playing Standard American it’s easy – open 2♣. Now the 2♣ opening is often 23+ points, but that is for balanced hands. With an unbalanced hand, open 2♣ if you are within one trick of game in your hand. This West hand easily qualifies.

And what happened? The ♦Q was doubleton ‘onside’ and so 12 tricks were easy. It was passed out in 1♠ at two tables scoring 12 tricks so 230 to E-W. At another table this West let North play in 3♣ undoubled! That resulted in just +100 for E-W and the deserved frigid bottom. A couple of pairs made somewhat miserable ‘efforts’ – reaching 3♠ and 4♦. The only decent E-W score was +1100 defending 5♣ doubled.

And how should the bidding go playing Standard American?

2♣ - 2♦ - 2♠ - 4♠ - pass; where 2♠ is game forcing and so 4♠ is weak (fast arrival).

The bottom lines: -

- With 9 or more tricks in your hand, open 2♣.
- With 9 or more tricks in your hand, do not let the opponents play in 3 of your void!

Play quiz

Answer overleaf.

YOU ↓ You are North, defending against 6♠. You lead the ♣J which declarer wins with the ♣K. Declarer then leads the ♠J, do you cover?

♠ Q4	Dealer:	West	North	East	South
♥ Q92	South	-	-	-	pass
♦ J8432	Both vul	1♣	pass	1♥	pass
♣ J106		1♠	pass	4NT	pass
		5♦	pass	6♠	all pass
N	♠ A1076				
W E	♥ K865				
S	♦ A9	← DUMMY			
	♣ AQ2				

Increasing the odds

Board 7 from Monday 18th

Dealer: ♠ Q4
South ♥ Q92
Both vul ♦ J8432
♣ J106

♠ KJ95	N	♠ A1076
♥ A104	W E	♥ K865
♦ K105	S	♦ A9
♣ K94		♣ AQ2

♠ 832
♥ J73
♦ Q76
♣ 8753

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

Not a great slam, but 4 out of 7 tables reached it on Monday, so let's have a look: -

Obviously one rebids 1♠ at (1) – I note that one pair somehow reached a very poor 3NT – guess that they don't know about the power of the 4-4 fit?

Anyway, it's all obvious up to (2) but should East go slamming? It's 29+ combined points with a 4-4 ♠ fit. Enough for slam? Maybe, it's close, but I would settle for 4♠ because both of the 4 card suits have just one honour – A1076 is pushing it for slam quality when the points are borderline. Note that a 4♠ bid is not shut-out, it shows enough points for game but with no singleton (otherwise splinter); partner is invited to press on with a suitable hand (about 15+).

And what happened? Obviously the one pair in 3NT got a deserved poor score. 6♠ depends upon finding the ♠Q – 3 pairs succeeded and one failed. The other two tables were in 4♠ and 7♠ and both made 12 tricks

It appears that finding the ♠Q is a 50% guess, so why did 5 out of the 6 playing in ♠'s succeed? I know that I would have got it wrong but for a little help from the opponents: -

So how do you play this ♠ suit?

Usually with 5 out missing the queen one should lay down (or lead up to) an honour and then finesse on the 2nd round. But when you hold the jack, ten and nine you can increase the otherwise 50% odds by inducing an inexperienced player into making a mistake.

Here I played the ♠J from hand and intended to win with the ♠A if not covered and finesse the ♠9 on the way back. Fortunately this North foiled my losing decision by playing the ♠Q and leaving me with no losing option!

The bottom line: -

Only cover an honour with an honour if you can promote something in your or partner's hand.

Play Quiz Answer

You should smoothly duck. Since the ♠10 is in dummy there is little chance of promoting a card in partner's hand. Declarer has exactly 4 ♠'s and is fishing for the ♠Q; if you duck then he will rise with the ♠A in dummy and take a losing finesse into your ♠Q.

The only possible holding for partner where covering is correct is ♠K9x. That means declarer has ♠J8xx and it is unlikely that he would lead the ♠J from that holding (and it would be a poor play).

Responding to partner's take-out double

The next three deals feature a take-out double and an incorrect response. It's pretty straightforward really. When partner makes a take-out double it is rarely correct to pass. With zero points you have to bid; so a suit bid promises 0-9 points. A 1NT bid is 6-9 and denies a 4 card major of course. 2NT is 11-12. A jump in a suit is about 10-12 and with a stronger hand it's usually best to force with a cue bid of the opponent's suit.

If you hold a minimal hand with a 4 card major and a 5 card minor then you have to decide which to show; I would usually opt for the major suit.

But if RHO bids after your partner's double then you are no longer forced to bid, and so a non-jump in a suit promises some values, typically 7-9 points.

Let's see how this was not applied three times on Friday (the first two by the same player!): -

Don't deny a 4 card major

Board 11 from Friday 22nd, love all.

West East (D)

♠ AJ92 ♠ 854
♥ Q974 ♥ AKJ10
♦ AQ ♦ 6543
♣ Q65 ♣ 93

Table A

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

Table B

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

Table A: So what should you bid at (1)? Double or 1NT? If you double then you are more likely to find a possible major suit fit if partner is weak, but what if he bids 1♦? People never agree with this type of hand and so I think that either 1NT or double are reasonable, provided that you play Stayman and transfers after a 1NT overcall.

And what about this 1NT bid at (2)? Now the 1NT response to a double shows 6-9 points, but it's usually best to have a stop in the suit bid. But the over-riding factor in bidding 1NT is that it denies a 4 card major. 1NT here is terrible.

Table B: This West chose 1NT at (1) and East bid Stayman. The 3♥ invitation at (3) is marginal but certainly acceptable.

And what happened? 3♥ made exactly and beat the 1NT contract at two other tables. Quite how one E-W pair landed in 2♠ (just making) baffles me.

The bottom line. Never deny a 4 card major. But overcalling 1NT with one (or both) majors is acceptable provided that you play Stayman over partner's 1NT overcall (it is standard).

A weak jump shift?

Board 4 from Friday 22nd

Dealer: ♠ Q965
West ♥ J82
Both vul ♦ 98632
♣ 3

♠ A743 N ♠ 10
♥ 96 W E ♥ KQ107543
♦ AK S ♦ 7
♣ AQ642 ♣ 10975
♠ KJ82
♥ A
♦ QJ1054
♣ KJ8

Table A

West	North (E)	East (B)	South
1♣ (1)	pass	1♥ (2)	dbl (3)
1♠ (4)	2♦ (5)	2♥ (6)	3♦
3♥ (7)	4♦ (8)	4♥	dbl (9)
all pass			

Table B

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

Some interesting bidding, let's have a look: -

- Table A: (1) What would you open with this hand? It's 17 points but really is too strong for 1NT. I would open 1♣ with a view to rebidding either 2♠ or 2NT, depending upon whether your partnership style allows 2NT when holding 4♠'s.
- (2) What should East respond? 1♥ is correct. This East hand is not strong enough for 2♥ (game forcing) and I discuss the 'weak' 2♥ jump at (2) at Table B later.
- (3) And what about South's double? You need a good/shapely hand to bid here as the opponents have already shown about 20 points minimum and neither is limited. This hand is probably just about good enough.
- (4) West is not obliged to rebid after the opponent's double and to do so shows extras, but this hand has too many extras. It's far too good for 1♠. Re-double or 2♠ or 2NT are the sensible options.
- (5) So what did you bid with Hand E(b) in this week's quiz? If West had not bid over partner's double you would have to bid either 1♠ or 2♦, showing 0-9 points (I prefer 1♠). Since West has bid you are off the hook and to bid is a 'free bid' and shows about 7-9 points. Obviously this North hand should pass.
- (6) This East Hand could not jump last go, but with this great suit I think an invitational 3♥ is better than just 2♥. 4♥ is also an alternative.
- (7) With this monster, 4♥ is in order anyway.
- (8) So a number of poor bids so far, but this 4♦ really is worse than North's previous outing. Quite why he wanted to 'push them up' is a mystery.
- (9) A clear double. Somebody is lying but partner has confirmed a good hand with about 8 or 9 points so obviously the opponents are way overboard??

- Table B: (2) A word about the weak jump response. This is not standard, but some more experienced players play that when partner opens with 1♣/♦ then a jump to 2♥/♠ is pre-emptive. And by pre-emptive it is meant a 6 or 7 card suit that is too weak to reply at the one level; so about 2-5 points. This East hand is far too good.

And what happened? 4♥ was bid and made exactly at 3 tables and so North's shenanigans converted a top into a bottom by pushing then into the easy game and inviting partner to double. At the 4th table N-S were allowed to play in 4♦ for the N-S top.

The bottom lines: - The weak jump shift is weak, it is much weaker than an opening 2♥/♠ since partner has opened. KQxxxx is far too good.

- A free bid after partner's take-out double promises 7-9 points.

Pre-empt only once

Board 15 from Friday 22nd.

Dealer: ♠ J9
South ♥ 52
N-S vul ♦ 10752
♣ Q10983

♠ A104 N ♠ KQ8632
♥ K8 W E ♥ 7
♦ AK84 S ♦ Q63
♣ AKJ4 ♣ 762

♠ 75
♥ AQJ109643
♦ J9
♣ 5

Table A

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

Table B

West	North	East (C)	South
-	-	-	1♥ (1)
dbl	pass	1♠ (3)	4♥ (4)
dbl	all pass		

Table C

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

So what would you open with this South hand? It's an 8 card suit so normally it's 4♥. But there are just 7½ tricks and the vulnerability is unfavourable. The law of two applies at this vulnerability and a cautious player would open 3♥, although I would not argue with a 4♥ opener. But I would argue with South's bidding at Tables A & B: -

Table A: This south chose to open 3♥, which is probably the best bid. But then he undid his good work at (2) by bidding again. There really is no excuse for this – if you consider that the hand is worth 4♥, then bid it first go. Do not open at a lower level and let the opponents exchanges information before they double you for penalties.

Table B: This South chose to open 1♥, I prefer 3♥ or 4♥. Anyway, West doubled and what did you bid at (3) with Hand C in this week's quiz? In response to partner's take-out double a non-jump bid is 0-9 points, so bid 2♠ as this East did?

If you think that this East hand is seven points, then look again. Partner has doubled ♥'s and that usually promises ♠'s. You have an excellent 6 card ♠ suit and a singleton in the opponent's suit. This Hand C is easily worth a jump to 2♠, maybe more.

So East has missed the boat and E-W will not find their slam now, but South then let them off the hook by making the same mistake as his partner in crime at Table A by bidding an unwise 4♥ at (4).

Table C: This E-W do not play Michaels and so this immediate cue bid of the opponent's suit at (5) shows an enormous hand (equivalent to a 2♣ opener). Obviously East should jump to 3♠ at (6) in search of slam.

And what happened? 4♠ made +2 at both tables. 4♥ doubled went 3 down for 800 away. At the 4th table the final contract was 3♥ doubled (minus two).

The bottom lines: - Do not bid again after pre-empting, but pre-empt to the limit 1st go.

KQxxxx in a suit that partner can support is worth far more than 5 points.

4-4 or 5-4?

Board 8 from Friday 22nd

Dealer: ♠ AQJ7
 West ♥ AK95
 Love all ♦ 92
 ♣ A103

♠ K4 N ♠ 853
 ♥ QJ W E ♥ 107
 ♦ J1054 S ♦ KQ763
 ♣ QJ987 ♣ 542
 ♠ 10962
 ♥ 86432
 ♦ A8
 ♣ K6

Table A

West	North (F)	East	South
pass	1♣	pass	1♥
pass	2NT (1)	pass	3♠ (2)
pass	4♥ (3)	pass	all pass

Table B

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

Table A: (1) So what did you rebid with Hand F at (1) in this week's quiz? The hand started out as a very good 18 points. After partner bids ♥'s it improves and is now easily worth a game force. 2NT shows 18-19 points and, although rarely passed, is not forcing. I prefer 4♥ or the 2♠ bid of Table B.

(2) Normally this bidding of ♠'s having opened ♥'s would be a reverse showing extra values (16+). But after partner has shown strength it's best to play that it is simply natural and not showing any extras.

(3) Apparently North intended to bid this all along (he considered his 2NT bid as forcing). So I asked why he did not simply bid 4♥ at (1)? He said that he considered 4♥ to be shut-out; more of this soon.

Table B: This North chose 2♠ at (1) and this is a very sensible game forcing bid. I would have bid 4♥ but upon reflection I believe that 2♠ may be a better bid as there may be a superior 4-4 ♠ fit. South obviously supports the ♠'s at (4), I would have bid 4♠ (fast arrival). But I find North's 4♥ bid at (5) inconsistent; why bid ♠'s initially if you want to play in ♥'s? And, again, as South I would convert to 4♠ at (6) because it's a known 4-4 fit (often better than 5-4) and, on this bidding, North may have only 3 ♥'s.

And what happened? All 4 tables bid to 4♥, 3 made 12 tricks and the 4th made 13 tricks. With the ♠K onside and the ♥'s splitting 12 tricks are easy. But note that if you play in a ♠ contract then 13 tricks are trivial! – you get a ♦ discard on a long ♥.

The bottom lines: -

- Look for the 4-4 fit. It is usually better than a 5-3 fit and a good 4-4 fit is even better than a 5-4 fit.
- Don't bid ♠'s unless you would consider them as trumps.
- If you find a 4-4 fit, then don't lose it!
- A sequence like 1♣ - 1♥ - 4♥ is most certainly not shut-out. It shows about 19-20 points and it invites partner to look for slam with a suitable hand. If you play splinters then it denies a singleton or void.
- Do not confuse the above sequence with Fast Arrival. Fast Arrival is a jump to game in a *game forcing* situation.

The Jump Shift

Hand G	Hand H	Hand B
♠ 10	♠ 10	♠ 10
♥ KQJ1086	♥ Q109543	♥ KQ107543
♦ A1062	♦ J62	♦ 7
♣ KQ	♣ 975	♣ 10975

It's time to cover the jump shift. Partner opens 1♣ or 1♦, what do you bid? In Standard American a jump to 2♥ would be strong, a good 5+ (usually 6+) card suit and game forcing. Hand G is a typical example.

Another less popular scheme is that a jump is weak, but by weak we really mean weak.

When partner opens and you have 6 or more points you simply bid your suit at the one

level. So the weak jump shift is defined as a hand with a long (6 or 7) card major but *too weak* to respond; i.e. it is 2-5 points. Hand H is typical for such a weak 2♥ response. Hand B is far too strong for this weak jump shift and should simply respond 1♥.

Bidding Quiz Answers

Hand A: 2♣. This hand is far too strong for a 1♠ opener. A 2♣ opening is 23+ points if balanced or else one trick short of game. This hand has at least 9 playing tricks and so should open 2♣ - you need very little from partner to make slam!

Hand B: 1♥. The hand is not good enough for a game forcing jump to 2♥. If you play weak jump shifts (so 2♥ is weak) then you should still bid 1♥ as this hand is far too good for a weak jump shift which is about 2-5 points. I would never dream of a pre-emptive bid with this hand, you have 4 card support for partner and an excellent 7 card major; if you want to pre-empt then the only bid other than 1♥ that makes any sense to me is 4♥.

Hand C: 2♠. This hand is far too good for a feeble 1♠. I would not argue if you bid 3♠ or even 4♠.

Hand D: 1♥. This promises 0-9 points. 1NT (6-9) would be a very poor bid because it denies a 4 card major and usually suggests a stop in the suit bid. Even if this ♥ suit were nit so strong, I would always prefer 1♥ to 1♦, show the 4 card major.

A couple of club players may be quoted as saying '*I consider it more important to show my points than to show a 4 card major*'. If you are a believer in that philosophy, then take up Precision ♣ rather than a natural system like Standard American or Acol.

Hand E: (a) 1♠. You must bid and both 1♠ or 2♦ show 0-9 points. It's usually best to show the major and so I prefer 1♠.

(b) pass. Once RHO bids then you do not have to respond to partner's double. So with 0-6 points you pass and with 7-9 you make a non-jump bid.

Hand F: 4♥. 3♥ is not good enough as it is only invitational. A 2NT bid is 18-19 points but is not 100% forcing. This is 18 points but it has improved by partner's bid and must insist upon game. 4♥ is the 'obvious' bid - it shows about 19-20 points, 4 card support but no singleton/void (you would have splintered). This jump to game here is most definitely not a weak or shut out bid (as one member incorrectly suggested). Fast arrival only applies in game forcing situations.

Now I would have bid 4♥ but I also like the 2♠ bid made at one table - but only if you intend to play in 4♠ if partner supports ♠'s!

Monday 25/10/2004

Friday 29/10/2004

1st Paul/Terry 65%
 2nd Clive/Ken 59%

1st Dave/Jim 63%
 2nd Alex/Jeff 59%

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

Hand A

Hand B

What do you open, non vul in 1st seat with Hand A?

♠ 97

♠ KQ32

♥ J

♥ K98432

♦ K962

♦ 10

♣ QJ10987

♣ 54

With Hand B partner opens 3♣ and RHO bids 3NT, what do you do?

Hand C

Hand D

With Hand C RHO opens 1NT, (a) what do you bid?
 Suppose you overcall 3♠ and LHO bids 4♥ round to you.
 (b) what do you do now?

♠ AQ107654

♠ AK54

♥ K

♥ Q93

♦ 8

♦ Q85

♣ J953

♣ J75

With Hand D RHO opens 1♣. (a) what do you do?
 Suppose you pass, LHO bids 1♥ and RHO bids 2♣, then
 (b) what do you do this time?

Hand E

Hand F

With Hand E partner opens 1NT. (a) what do you bid if RHO
 overcalls 2♠? (b) what do you bid if RHO overcalls 3♠?
 (c) suppose you bid 4♥ (or 3♥ in sequence (a) which partner
 raises to 4♥) and RHO now bids 4♠, what do you do?

♠ 2

♠ Q762

♥ 98752

♥ KJ64

♦ AKQ52

♦ AJ3

♣ 107

♣ 92

With Hand F LHO opens 1♣, RHO bids 1♥, LHO bids 2♣
 and this is passed round to you. What do you do?

What does a world Champion say?

Board 24 from Monday 19th July. N-S vul

West (A)	East (B)	West	North	East	South
♠ 97	♠ KQ32	me		Chuck	
♥ J	♥ K98432	3♣ (1)	3NT	4♣	pass
♦ K962	♦ 10	pass	dbl	all pass	
♣ QJ10987	♣ 54				

What did you open with Hand A? And what did you bid with Hand B? This may seem familiar – of course it is. It's from news-sheets 90 & 91, I was West, Chuck was East. Chuck blamed me for the lousy result – saying that you need a 7 card suit. I wrote the hand up and also reproduced a nearly identical hand where Marty Bergen also opened at the 3 level. Chuck dismissed this – saying that what Marty sez is total nonsense and that real bridge players will not pre-empt with a 6-card suit like this.

I maintained that a 3♣ opening was fine and that Chuck's 4♣ bid was ludicrous. Now of course I could not find a hand like Chuck's in my library – I don't think that any sensible player would dream of bidding 4♣, let alone try to defend the bid later!

And Chuck most certainly did try to defend his atrocious bid – see his Devil's Advocate article reproduced in news-sheet 91. Chuck says that other 'top players' agree with his 4♣ bid and disagree with my 3♣. Names please - I assume it was Hans ? Or is this just another Chuck fabrication? I stated that I disagreed with everything Chuck wrote and that I would try to get an expert opinion.

Anyway, as promised, I sent the hand off to an expert panel – so let's see what a multiple ex-world champion says about my bid and about Chuck's bid.

So what did the expert do with my hand?

3♣. These days it is normal to open a non-vul pre-empt on a 6 card suit in 1st or 3rd seat, particularly when the suit is as solid as this one and with an outside 4 card minor. I would describe 3♣ as middle of the road.

And what did the expert do with Chuck's hand?

Pass. 4♣ is unwise for two reasons. Firstly, once one opponent has described his hand fairly accurately then a further pre-empt gives them fielder's choice.... Secondly, this hand is defensive in nature and may well not produce a single trick in offence.

Don't bid your hand twice.

Board 3 from Monday 25th

Dealer: ♠ AQ107654
South ♥ K
E-W vul ♦ 8
♣ J953

♠ KJ98 N ♠ 2
♥ J106 W E ♥ 98752
♦ J3 S ♦ AKQ52
♣ AKQ2 ♣ 107

♠ 3
♥ AQ43
♦ 109764
♣ 864

Table A

West	North (C)	East (E)	South
-	-	-	pass
1NT	2♠ (1)	3♥ (2)	pass
4♥ (3)	4♠ (4)	pass (5)	pass
dbl	all pass		

Table B

West	North (C)	East (E)	South
-	-	-	pass
1NT	3♠ (1)	4♥ (2)	pass
pass	4♠ (4)	dbl (5)	pass

- Table A: (1) So what did you overcall with Hand C in this week's quiz? Playing natural methods I would choose 3♠ but would not argue with 2♠ or even 4♠.
- (2) What did you bid with Hand E(a) in this week's quiz? This East bid 3♥ (as would I) which is best played as forcing.
- (3) So should West bid 3NT or 4♥ now? The ♠ holding shouts out for 3NT but there is a 5-3 ♥ fit and West has a weak doubleton ♦. It's close and I would not argue with either although 3NT would have been a nice contract – because it's played by the correct hand – 4♥ is played by East and a ♠ lead spells doom.
- (4) Of course it does not matter what West bids if North behaves like this. This is one of my pet 'hates'. Bid your hand just once. If you think it's worth 4♠ then bid 4♠ at your first turn and nobody will say anything other than 'unlucky' if you get a bad score. Bid again like this and you deserve all the criticism thrown at you.
- (5) And what did you bid with Hand E(c)? I would double with these weak ♥'s – save partner the decision. 5♦ may work out, but I would prefer to take the money.

- Table B: This was my table (I was East). This time North overcalled 3♠ at (1) which would also be my choice. It's not quite so easy for East now as it was at Table A; you are now one level higher at (2) and so have to bid 4♥, going past 3NT.
- (4) So North's pre-empt has worked; the opponents are in 4♥ which will go down. Bidding again here is terrible. North then 'tried a Chuck' – If you have made a stupid bid and get a poor score (like Chuck's infamous 4♣ bid) – then immediately go on the offensive and try to blame partner. This North said that he thought 4♥ was making as his partner did not double; saying that South should double the 4♥ bid. What nonsense. The other three players at the table were all also very experienced and all told him exactly what they thought.

And what happened? 4♠ doubled cost 500 and so these N-S's shared the bottom. Now I don't know the bidding at other tables but all of the other E-W's got too high (5♦, 5♦ dbl, 5♥ and 5♥ dbl). Presumably North also bid 4♠ at some stage – and in that case either East or West should double. 5♦ by East at (5) is unwise (take the money). The bottom lines: -

- If you have made a foolish bid and it results in a bad score, don't try to blame partner.
- Once you have pre-empted then do not bid again.
- Pre-empt to the level that you are prepared to go to at the first opportunity.
- The 5 level belongs to the opponents.

Who should make the effort?

Board 3 from Friday 29th

Dealer: ♠ J8
South ♥ A1085
E-W vul ♦ 10976
♣ 863

♠ AK54	N	♠ Q762
♥ Q93	W E	♥ KJ64
♦ Q85	S	♦ AJ3
♣ J75		♣ 92

♠ 1093
♥ 72
♦ K42
♣ AKQ104

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

N-S scored a top for 2♣ making +1 when E-W can make 9 tricks in ♠'s. So which one of them should have bid? East says the West should double at (5) and West says that East should either double or bid 2♠ at (6). Who do you back? Here are my opinions: -

- (1) So what did you bid with Hand D(a) at (1) in this week's quiz? I don't like double because it has too many ♣'s. A take-out double should be short in the suit bid and playable in the other three suits unless strong enough to bid again over a minimum response. With this very flat hand bidding is dangerous.
- (2) North can bid either 1♦ or 1♥ here. My preference is 1♥ with a weak hand.
- (3) East could double but I definitely prefer pass.
- (4) I would rebid 1NT but 2♣ worked out OK.
- (5) So then, should West double now (to show ♠'s and ♦'s)? Did you double with Hand D(b) in this week's quiz? I believe that the answer is no – because bridge is a partnership game and East still has a go. But my main reason is that North is unlimited and bidding will be dangerous with this flat hand.
- (6) But here it's different. Did you bid at (6) with Hand F in this week's quiz? Both North and South have limited their hands and East is in the pass- out or balancing seat. He knows that partner has values and should either double or bid 2♠.

The bottom lines: -

- Be aware of balancing. In the pass-out seat you know that both opponents are limited and so you can 'bid partner's hand'.

Bidding Quiz Answers

Something a little new for the first two hands. Hand A is obviously Hand B's partner. Now we have seen these hands before (news-sheets 90 & 91) and Chuck and myself had widely different opinions. It was easy to find plenty of support in the literature for my 3♣ opening, but Chuck simply dismissed this as the writings of mad men. Obviously I could not find any documentation of anybody raising a pre-empt with two small after a 3NT overcall and so I wrote off to the UK's bidding quiz and got the views of a multiple ex-world champion. So here you can compare a World Champion's comments with Chuck's and mine: -

- Hand A: Me: 3♣. Looks pretty standard to me with this solid 6 card suit when non-vul. Marty Bergen opens at the 3 level on a virtually identical hand.
- Chuck: Pass. A 3-level pre-empt promises a 7 card suit. As far as Marty Bergen is concerned, I don't care what he has to say, EVER.
- World Champ: 3♣. These days it is normal to open a non-vul pre-empt on a 6 card suit in 1st or 3rd seat, particularly when the suit is as solid as this one and with an outside 4 card minor. I would describe 3♣ as middle of the road.
- Hand B: Me: Pass; and be thankful that partner has solved your otherwise awkward lead problem. 4♣ is ludicrous and is a no-win proposition. It is most certainly a candidate for the worst bid of the year.
- Chuck: 4♣. East has every reason to believe that opponents can make 3NT.
- World Champ: Pass. 4♣ is unwise for two reasons. Firstly, once one opponent has described his hand fairly accurately then a further pre-empt gives them fielder's choice.... Secondly, this hand is defensive in nature and may well not produce a single trick in offence.

Just a word about Chuck comment '*East has every reason to believe that opponents can make 3NT*'. This shows a complete lack of understanding of what pre-empting is all about. One pre-empts so that the opponents have little room to find the correct contract and nobody really knows what is best. To bid here when you have no idea if 3NT makes or not is just silly. It is similar to the beginner's mistake of bidding again having pre-empted.

So it looks like I drive down the middle of the road while Chuck mows down pedestrians on the sidewalk? Let's get onto last week's hands: -

- Hand C: (a) 3♠. It depends upon your partnership style/methods. 2♠, 3♠ or even 4♠ are all reasonable.
- (b) Pass. Once you have described your hand then that's it, to bid again is suicidal when both opponents have shown strength.
- Hand D: (a) Pass. Too many ♣'s for a take-out double.
- (b) Pass. Double would be for take-out showing ♠'s and ♦'s but there is no need for such a risky bid on this flat hand as partner is still there.
- Hand E: (a) 3♥. This is best played as forcing.
- (b) 4♥. What else?
- (c) Dbl. 5♦ could work out better but it really is a gamble – I prefer to 'take the money'. Pass (a forcing pass) is reasonable, but I like to take the pressure off partner and I don't really want to play in 5♥.
- Hand F: Either 2♠ or double. This is the pass-out seat and partner has values but was unable to bid. You have to 'bid his hand'.

♣ ♦

Club News Sheet – No. 105

5/11/2004

♥ ♠

Monday 1/11/2004

Friday 5/11/2004

1st Jeff/Alex 61%
2nd David/Kenneth 58%

1st Bob/Dave 66%
2nd Clive/Phil(UK) 60%

Bidding Quiz

Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A you are vul in 3 rd seat, what do you open?
♠ 7	♠ A7	(a) what do you open with Hand B?
♥ KJ1097543	♥ A7	(b) suppose you open 1♣ and partner bids 1♠, what now?
♦ AQ3	♦ AJ102	(c) suppose it goes 1♣ - 1♠ - 2♦. LHO then chips in with 2♥
♣ 10	♣ AJ643	and partner bids 3♦. What now?
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C partner opens 1♦ and RHO bids 2♠ (weak), what do you bid?
♠ 7	♠ Q	
♥ A942	♥ 865	With Hand D LHO opens 2♥ and partner overcalls 2♠, what do you do?
♦ J9643	♦ AJ109	
♣ AQJ	♣ KQ1064	
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E partner opens 1NT, what do you do?
♠ Q2	♠ 843	
♥ J652	♥ KJ	With Hand F partner opens 1♠, what do you do?
♦ J10963	♦ QJ986	
♣ A4	♣ K32	
Hand G	Hand H	With Hand G RHO opens 2♥, what do you bid?
♠ AK1064	♠ AK864	
♥ A104	♥ A	With Hand H it goes pass from both LHO and partner and RHO opens 4♥, what do you do?
♦ 85	♦ 984	
♣ A52	♣ AQ92	

Bidding the opponent's suit

I was called over on Monday when a player bid a suit that the opponents had bid and turned up with nothing in the suit. I said that that was quite normal and need not be alerted. One player disagreed with me and was adamant that any bid that is not natural needs alerting.

Now the rules on alerts keep changing; they are different from country to country and are also different depending upon the level of the competition. This is how I see it: - A bid that is 'standard' need not be alerted. So no alert is needed for Stayman or transfers etc. When you bid the suit that an opponent had bid then this is not showing that suit (standard) and so need not be alerted. In fact, strictly speaking, one should only alert if the bid is natural (this also applies to 2♦/♥ after partner's 1NT opening – alert if natural!). Now this is all rather complicated and I don't really care who alerts what as long as they are reasonable sensible about it, agreed? The best solution is to fill out a convention card, especially for regular partnerships. Gerry will be bringing me some nice new blank convention cards when he comes in December – so no excuse then.

Anyway, there were a few examples of this 'bidding of the opponent's suit' on Monday: -

Bidding the opponent's suit – part 1

Board 20 from Monday 1st

Dealer: ♠ AK1064
West ♥ A104
both vul ♦ 85
 ♣ A52

Table A

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

♠ 953	N	♠ J872
♥ KQJ732	W E	♥ 9
♦ 643	S	♦ KQ72
♣ 9		♣ J873
	♠ Q	
	♥ 865	
	♦ AJ109	
	♣ KQ1064	

Table B

West	North (G)	East	South (D)
2♥	2♠ (1)	pass	3♥ (2)
pass	3NT	all pass	

Table A: (1) So what did you bid at (1) with Hand G in this week's quiz? Double is incorrect. A one-level overcall is about 7-17 points, a two-level overcall is about 11-17 points and 2♠ is clearly correct with this hand.

(2) And what did you bid at (2) with Hand D? I don't like pass, see Table B.

Table B: South had the same decision at (2). Now 3♣ is not too bad but it is not forcing. My partner's choice of 3♥ is easily the best bid. It sets up a forcing situation and asks, in the first instance, for a ♥ stop. Since North had a ♥ stop this ended the auction in the correct spot.

And what happened? 3NT was bid 4 times, making 9,10 or 11 tricks. 4♠ was bid once, just making and N-S played in 2♠ twice making +2.

The bottom lines: -

- You can overcall at the two level with 11-17 points.
- If partner has overcalled at the two level, then 12 points is usually enough for game.
- Bidding the opponent's suit can mean many things. It invariably denies a good holding in the suit and generally asks partner to bid NT with a stop.

Bidding the opponent's suit – part 2

Board 17 from Monday 1st

Dealer: ♠ A7
North ♥ A7
Love all ♦ AJ102
♣ AJ643

♠ KJ54	N	♠ Q102
♥ 5	W E	♥ KJ109642
♦ 843	S	♦ 65
♣ KQ1098		♣ 5
	♠ 9863	
	♥ Q83	
	♦ KQ97	
	♣ 72	

West	North (B)	East	South
-	1♣ (1)	pass (2)	1♠ (3)
pass	2♦ (4)	2♥ (5)	3♦ (6)
pass	3♥ (7)	pass	3NT
all pass			

- (1) So what did you open at (1) with Hand B(a) in this week's quiz? It's not good enough for 2NT so 1♣ is fine.
- (2) I would overcall with a weak 3♥ here. A weak 2♥ is inadequate and pass is!
- (3) So should South respond 1♦ (up the line) or 1♠? It's a matter of style but I prefer 1♠ with a weak hand like this.
- (4) What did you bid with Hand B(b) at (4) in this weeks quiz? I chose 2♦, a reverse. After a one-level response it's up to you if you play it as forcing, most play it forcing for one round. If your partner may pass 2♦ then I guess you have to bid 3♦ or 2NT.
- (5) Finally a rather pathetic noise, but it's too little too late. There is little point in bidding 2♥ here as it takes up no bidding space and may even help the opponents.
- (6) North's reverse promises about 16+ points and so this South hand correctly just supported ♦'s. As South is now under no obligation to bid (because of the overcall) this raise to 3♦ shows more than a minimum. This belated murmur by East actually helps N-S!
- (7) What did you bid with Hand B(c) at (7) in this week's quiz? North's hand has improved now that partner has promised ♦ support and a non-min and so North can look for 3NT. He has a stop and 3NT is not a poor bid, but I would like a 2nd stop in partner's hand and so bid 3♥, the opponent's suit.

And what happened? Two East players bid to 4♥, got doubled and went down three to share the bottom. I don't know the bidding – why on earth East would want to bid more than 3♥, especially against non-vul opponents is a mystery to me. I do hope that we did not have East pre-empting and then bidding again?

The bidding above was our table and we thus (because of these silly 4♥ contracts) got just a little above average for 3NT making. One other table was in 3NT and as it was by North I guess he just blasted it.

There were three other curious contracts; 3♣ doubled by North (-3), 3NT doubled by West (!) (-2) and 3♥(-2) by East.

Quite how one East managed to settle in 3♥ undoubled is strange. Presumably he overcalled with a weak 3♥. Whether South chooses to double or not is marginal, but surely North must do something (double) when holding four aces?

Bidding the opponent's suit – part 3

Board 12 from Monday 1st

Dealer: ♠ AJ96
West ♥ Q75
Love all ♦ AKQ8
♣ 95

Table A
West North East South (C)
pass 1♦ (1) 2♠ (2) 3♠ (3)
pass 3NT all pass

♠ 54 N ♠ KQ10832
♥ K1086 W E ♥ J3
♦ 1075 S ♦ 2
♣ 8762 ♣ K1043
♠ 7
♥ A942
♦ J9643
♣ AQJ

'Expert' Standard American Table
West North East South
pass 1NT 2♠ 3♠ (4)
pass 3NT (5) all pass

- Table A: (1) This pair play a weak NT and (I assume) 5 card majors and so opened 1♦. Playing Standard American the correct opening is 1NT and playing Acoll it's 1♠.
- (2) A textbook weak jump overcall.
- (3) What did you bid with Hand C at (3) in this week's quiz? This South reasonably thought that if partner had a ♠ stop then 3NT would be a fine contract. Now, actually, I think that there is a better bid. If you play negative doubles I would double just in case there is a 4-4 ♥ fit; and subsequently bid ♠'s if no ♥ fit is uncovered.
- 'Expert' Table (4) When partner's 1NT opening is overcalled you obviously lose your Stayman bid. So most experienced players play that a cue bid of opponent's suit is Stayman. It is game forcing. As this is a specific meaning of the cue bid (it is not a general bid asking for a stop) I feel that it could be alerted.
- (5) North bids 3NT with no 4 card ♥ suit. Now this is a rather simplistic scenario because North may or may not have a ♠ stop! I have covered the complete scheme in the section on Lebensohl.

And what happened? Somehow two N-S pairs managed to reach a silly 4♥ on a 4-3 fit! I cannot understand how North can fail to bid 3NT however the bidding goes. Four tables found the excellent 3NT and the last played in 5♦.

Now then, I'm sure that everybody agrees that the bidding in the last three examples was fine. But I was called over by Jim (West) at this table when dummy came down with just the ♠7. Jim maintained that the 3♠ bid at (3) promises ♠'s unless alerted. I disagree. Jim says that he will download something from the internet to prove me wrong. Fine by me, I will always publish any sensible opinions by anyone in the news-sheet. Anyway, until I am proven wrong I do not believe that a bid of the opponent's suit needs alerting – it is self alerting.

Note that in board 20 my partner bid 3♥ (the opponent's suit) which I did not alert. And in board 17 I bid 3♥ (again the opponent's suit) which my partner did not alert. Quite so.

And as an aside, Paul (Ire) and myself were discussing this and Paul said that currently at higher level tournaments any bid above 3NT does not need to be alerted. I think that this is very sensible – virtually all bids above 3NT are conventional and it's up to the opponents to ask (preferably at the end of the auction unless they intend to possibly bid).

Pre-empt to the limit (and then keep quiet)

Board 5 from Friday 5th

Dealer: ♠ J3
North ♥ -
N-S vul ♦ K10752
♣ K87653

♠ AK864	N	♠ Q10952
♥ A	W E	♥ Q862
♦ 984	S	♦ J6
♣ AQ92		♣ J4
	♠ 7	
	♥ KJ1097543	
	♦ AQ3	
	♣ 10	

Table A

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

Table B

West (H)	North	East	South (A)
-	pass	pass	4♥ (1)
dbl (3)	pass	pass	(4) pass

Table C

West (H)	North	East	South (A)
-	pass	pass	4♥ (1)
pass (3)	pass	pass	

Table A: So what did you open with Hand A in this week's quiz? This South chose a weak 2♥ – feeble is an understatement. And it's too late to try again at (2) – the opponents have found their fit.

Table B: This South got it right. Generally speaking with a 6 card suit it's a 2 level pre-empt. With 7 cards it's a 3-level pre-empt and with an 8 card (major) it's the 4 level. But what did you do with Hand H at (3) in this week's quiz? It's much too good to pass and either dbl or 4♠ are acceptable. With a 5 card ♠ suit I prefer 4♠.

With 4♥'s East chose to pass; reasonable, but I would bid 4♠.

Table C: This West chose a meek pass at (3). Clearly this is wrong as 4♠ makes comfortably opposite just a 6 count and 4♥ should go down.

And what happened? N-S were allowed to play in 4♥ at 4 of the 5 tables (doubled at just one table). It went down twice and made twice (when West did not signal for a ♣ on the 2nd round of ♥'s). 4♠ made exactly.

The bottom line: -

- Pre-empt to as high as you are prepared to go at your first turn and do not bid again.
- When the opponents pre-empt then you must assume that partner has his fair share of the outstanding points. Obviously West cannot make 4♠ on his own, but he should assume that partner has 6-7 points here.
- If you feel that 4♠ is pushing it, then double. A double of 4♥/♠ is generally played as values. Partner may bid with a shapely hand or else pass.

Worth a raise to 3♠?

Board 16 from Friday 5th, E-W vul.

North	South (F)
♠ AK975	♠ 843
♥ AQ52	♥ KJ
♦ 72	♦ QJ986
♣ 105	♣ K32

Neither of these contracts were successful, let's have a look: -

Table A

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

Table B

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

So what did you bid with Hand F at (1) in this week's quiz? It's an interesting hand as there are a number of fairly reasonable options: -

- (a) 1NT. 6-poor 10 points. With 3 card support it is often best to support but with all the honours outside the suit 1NT is a good bid.
- (b) 2♠. 6-poor 10 points. This is an equally good bid.
- (c) 2NT. A good 10 to poor 12 points. This is not a good 10 and so I don't like the bid.
- (d) 3♠. A good 10 to poor 12 points. Again, the hand is not good enough. And this direct jump usually promises 4 card support.
- (e) 2♦ (with a view to bidding 3♠ next go, showing 3 card support and good 10 to 12 points). Again, I don't think that this hand is good enough.

And what happened? 4♠ was bid twice and went two down. 2NT was 1 down. Just 1 pair stopped in 2♠. And how should the hand be bid?

Either: - 1♠ - 2♠ - pass or 1♠ - 1NT - 2♥ - 2♠ - pass

The bottom lines: -

- Points in partner's suit are good. No points in partner's suit is bad.
- A 10 point hand is on the border (between 1♠/1NT or 2♠/2NT). With 10 points look at how good your hand is for partner (4 card support is good, honours in partners suit are good).
- You need a very good 10 to make the higher bid.

And this deal is an excellent illustration of my point about bad 10 counts. North has a good opener yet even 3♠ does not make. Why? Because the South hand is a very poor 10 in support of ♠'s.

An Acol Auction

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

This was the auction at one table where N-S play Acol. Here East overcalled but that is irrelevant. Playing Acol you can respond at the two level with as little as 8 points (as opposed to the good 10 required with Standard American). So playing Acol 2♦ at (1) is acceptable. But South should then

bid 2♠ at (2), thus showing 8-poor 10 with just 3 card ♠ support. Perfect.

Worth an invitation?

Board 11 from Friday 5th, love all.

North (E) South

♠ Q2 ♠ AJ3
♥ J652 ♥ KQ4
♦ J10963 ♦ A54
♣ A4 ♣ K1098

Table A

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

Table B

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

Table A: So what did you bid at (1) with this North Hand E in this week's quiz? Pass, or is it worth an invitation? 8 points is the norm for an invite (so 2♣; followed by 3♥ if partner responds 2♥ or by 2NT if partner responds 2♦/♠). But is this hand worth 8 points? 6 of the points in doubletons is bad, but a 5 card suit is good, as is an additional 4 card suit. The J109 in a 5 card suit are also good and that's enough for me to make a move. So 2♣.
2♦ at (2) denies a 4 card major. 2NT at (3) then invites 3NT and South has an easy bid to the good game.

Table B: This started off the same but at (3) this North decided to chicken out. It may sometimes work, but I prefer 2NT.

And what happened? 3NT either made or made+1, scoring far more than 2♦ making 10 tricks.

Bidding Quiz Answers

Hand A: 4♥. It's a decent 8 card suit and so too good for 3♥.

Hand B: (a) 1♣. It's not good enough for a 2NT opener.

(b) 2♦. A reverse. If you do not play this as forcing then I guess it's either 3♦ or 2NT.

(c) 3♥. You want to play in 3NT but I would like a little something in ♥'s in partner's hand. A direct 3NT is a reasonable alternative.

Hand C: Double (negative). Look for the 4-4 ♥ fit. If this hand did not have 4 ♥'s then 3♠ (asking partner for a ♠ stop) would be the bid. 5♦ (as chosen at one table) is a poor bid at pairs as either a 4-4 ♥ game or 3NT will score more.

Hand D: 3♥. 3NT is sure to be a good spot if partner has a ♥ stop. If partner denies a ♥ stop (say with 3♠) then you can bid 4♣, forcing, leaving open all the options of 4♠, 5♣ or 5♦.

Hand E: 2♣. It's close but I think it's just about worth an invitation. So bid Stayman and raise a 2♥ response to 3♥ and bid 2NT over a 2♦/♠ response.

Hand F: 1NT. 2♠ is an equally good alternative. The hand has poor support for partner's suit and is not worth 2NT or 3♠ or 2♦.

Hand G: 2♠. With a 5 card ♠ suit 2♠ is far better than double. To double and then bid ♠'s shows a stronger hand. If the ♠ suit were a minor then 2NT would be reasonable.

Hand H: 4♠. Dbl is OK but not so good in my view. Pass is too feeble for me.



Monday 8/11/2004

Friday 12/11/2004

1st Phil(UK)/Mike (Can) 63 %
2nd Clive/Ken 62 %

1st Tomas/Philip(Ire) 61 %
2nd Kees/Bjorn 56 %

Bidding Quiz

Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.

Hand A Hand B With Hand A RHO opens 1♦, what do you bid?

♠ J2 ♠ AQ843
♥ AKJ6 ♥ KQ
♦ Q63 ♦ J53
♣ AK43 ♣ K108

With Hand B RHO opens 1♣, what do you bid?

Hand C Hand D

With Hand C you open 1♠ and partner responds 2♠. What do you bid?

♠ KQ10854 ♠ -
♥ KQ9 ♥ 65432
♦ A82 ♦ J753
♣ 6 ♣ AJ72

With Hand D partner opens 1♠. (a) what do you do?
(b) suppose that you bid 1NT, then what do you do after partner rebids 2♠?

Hand E Hand F

With Hand E RHO opens 1♣, what do you bid?

♠ K82 ♠ J
♥ A65 ♥ QJ102
♦ AJ52 ♦ 1093
♣ QJ8 ♣ AK653

With Hand F you open 1♣ and LHO overcalls 1NT (15-18). Partner passes and RHO bids 2♥ (transfer). What do you do?

Hand G Hand H

With Hand G RHO opens 1♥, what do you do?

♠ Q1076 ♠ QJ987642
♥ Q ♥ 53
♦ J92 ♦ 3
♣ AK1092 ♣ Q9

With Hand H you are in 1st seat, non-vul against vul. What do you open?

Hand J Hand K

With Hand J partner opens 1♠ and you raise to 2♠.
(a) Partner then bids 3♠ (invitational), what do you do?
(b) Partner then bids 3♦ (help-suit game try), what do you do?

♠ 9762 ♠ 2
♥ 107 ♥ KJ1062
♦ KQJ4 ♦ A987
♣ 743 ♣ KQ9

With Hand K you open 1♥, partner responds 1♠ and you bid 2♦. Partner then bids 2♠, what do you do now?

Hand L Hand M

What, if anything, do you open with Hand L, vul against non vul?

♠ K82 ♠ 3
♥ KQ10654 ♥ AQJ8
♦ J1065 ♦ AJ8
♣ - ♣ AJ1063

With Hand M what would you bid if
(a) Partner opens 3♠?
(b) Partner opens 4♠?

Double or Overcall? Part 1 Board 8 from Friday 12th, love all, dlr East

West (G) At the end of the Friday session I was accosted by a very experienced pair who did not like the opponent's bid with this hand. Apparently South had opened 1♥ and this hand doubled. What did you do with Hand G in this week's quiz? My inquisitors stated that double showed an opening hand. I disagreed. They then suggested that this hand should bid 2♣. I again disagreed. A 2♣ overcall is not incorrect, but I personally prefer dbl as this hand holds 4 ♠'s. Now this is an area where it appears that even very experienced players disagree. I believe that a take-out double of 1♥ is the best bid with this hand. I would still double if the ♥Q were a small ♥.

Time for a Terry lecture: -

Initially, a take out double and an overcall promise about the same strength. Typically about 8-16 for a one level overcall and 10+ for a shapely double; whatever, up to you. So a double is close to opening values, but does not promise an opening hand and is not necessarily stronger than a simple overcall. The difference is in the shape of the hand. An overcall promises a 5 card suit; a double is usually playable in the other three suits and generally denies a 5 card major. Let's have a couple of extreme hands: -

Hand X	Hand Y	
♠ K1076	♠ Q107	Take this Hand X for example. RHO opens 1♣. Would you timidly pass? It's nowhere near an opening bid and perhaps the feint hearted would pass, but I would double.
♥ K1076	♥ K97	And with Hand Y RHO opens 1♣, what do you do? This hand is stronger, so double? I most certainly would pass. When the opponents have opened the bidding it's shape that counts unless you have oodles of points.
♦ K9762	♦ KQ4	
♣ -	♣ K852	

So a double and an overcall initially show about the same strength. So what do you do with a very strong hand? Then you double and subsequently bid again. Thus double or overcall are initially about the same strength but double may show a very strong hand if the doubler later bids again. In my view double is fine with this Hand G and is what I would have chosen.

Incidentally, a two level overcall (or a double of a 1♠ or higher opening) needs to be stronger (about 11+ for a double of 1♠) as partner is then forced to the two level.

The bottom lines:

- There are opening hands that are not worth a double and doubling hands that are not worth an opening bid. It's shape that counts when doubling/overcalling.

Overcall or double? _part 2

Board 14 from Wednesday 10th

Dealer: ♠ 962

East ♥ A9764

Love all ♦ KQ2

♣ 42

♠ AQ843

N

♠ J105

♥ KQ W E

♥ J1083

♦ J53 S

♦ 1084

♣ K108

♣ Q75

♠ K7

♥ 52

♦ A976

♣ AJ963

West (B)	North	East	South (me)
----------	-------	------	------------

-	-	pass	1♣
---	---	------	----

dbl (1)	1♥ (2)	pass	2♣
---------	--------	------	----

dbl (3)	pass	2♠	pass
---------	------	----	------

3♠ (4)	pass (5)	pass	pass
--------	----------	------	------

(1) So what did you bid at (1) with Hand B in this week's quiz? I bet a lot of you doubled? That is wrong for a number of reasons and a couple of them are highlighted here. Suppose you double and partner bids a red suit, what will you do? A 2♠ bid would then show a very strong hand (too good to overcall) – about 17+ points.

So what is the correct bid? I would overcall 1♠ because it is usually best to get your decent 5 card major in. A reasonable alternative is 1NT – 15-18 with a ♣ stop.

(2) With 9 points you can re-double, but with poor ♠'s and a 5 card ♥ suit I like this 1♥ bid.

(3) West is now in a pickle (because of his unwise initial double). Any bid now shows values that he does not have but I guess that 2♠ is the worst of the evils. This 2nd double just digs the grave deeper.

(4) Now West has made two poor bids and overbid. But he has landed on his feet when partner luckily had no option but to bid his 3 card major. But some people just cannot stay on their feet and so West decided upon a monstrous overbid (partner has promised zero points – two passes and a forced bid).

(5) North could have doubled this. But this is a friendly club and there's no need to rub it in – a top is a top. And who knows, maybe West actually had his bid(s)?

And what happened? 3♠ was two down for a bottom. At other tables 2♠ made exactly.

The bottom lines: -

- If you have a 5 card major, then overcall.
- An overcall is not necessarily weaker than double, and shows about 8-16 points.
- A double followed by a new suit shows a big hand (too strong to overcall).

Overcall or double? _part 3Board 17 from Monday 8th

Dealer:	♠ 864					
North	♥ 1097		West	North	East(me)	South (A)
Love all	♦ K		-	pass	1♦	dbl (1)
	♣ J107652		3♦ (2)	pass	pass	dbl (3)
			pass	pass (4)	pass	
♠ Q976	N	♠ AK105				
♥ 85	W E	♥ Q432				
♦ J7542	S	♦ A1098				
♣ 98		♣ Q				
	♠ J2					
	♥ AKJ6					
	♦ Q63					
	♣ AK43					

Just one N-S pair (Clive/Ken) managed to find a good contract (4♣) on these cards, let's have a look: -

(1) So what did you bid at (1) with Hand A in this week's quiz? I bet a lot of you doubled? That is wrong for a number of reasons and a couple of them are highlighted here. Suppose you double and partner bids a not totally unexpected 1♠ - what do you do then? Any bid would show a stronger hand. It is unwise to double when you have a doubleton in an unbid major; the correct bid is 1NT, showing 15-18 pts and a ♦ stop.

(2) And what would you bid with this West hand at (2)? Pass is fine, but I quite like my partner's weak 3♦ bid. Now this is denying a 4 card major but the hand is too weak to bid 1♠ and RHO's double would normally show ♠'s and so, on this rare occasion, I think that by-passing the ♠ suit to find the pre-emptive bid is fine.

(3) Now South is in a spot because of his poor initial bid. He has no sensible bid. 3NT would show a much stronger hand (and with just one tentative ♦ stop will usually go way down). The ♥ suit is not long enough to venture 3♥. So double? Then how happy will you be if partner bids 3♠ and you get doubled? No. It's unbidable now.

(4) As it happened N-S had an escape route because North had a 6 card ♣ suit. Unfortunately at this table (and one other) he declined to bid it.

And how should the bidding have gone? South should overcall 1NT and then North will either transfer to 3♣ (via 2♠) or else pass (my preference). Both are respectable contracts and if there is further competition then North can bid on up to 4♣. Remember, once South bids 1NT then North is the captain in deciding how high to be pushed.

And what happened? Out of 7 tables, 3 N-S pairs overbid to 5♣ (one down). One stopped nicely in 4♣. One East was miraculously left to play in 1♠! And the last two tables were 3♦ doubled (making).

The bottom lines: -

- If you have a fairly balanced hand with 15-18 points, then overcall 1NT if you have a stop for RHO's suit.
- You must have a stop for the suit opened, but a 1NT overcall is fine with an outside weak suit.
- If you can accurately describe your hand in one go, do so.
- Do not double with a doubleton in an unbid major – you will be fixed later in the auction.
- Do not pass partner's take-out double without excellent trumps.

Bidding worth waking me up for?

Board 18 from Monday 8th, N-S vul.

On Monday night at about 10.00 pm one member woke up the whole household (we go to bed early) by phoning me to tell me how well he (Table A) had bid to this slam and asked for my comments. Well, I've commented on the phone call, so let's see about the bidding: -

West	East	<u>Table A</u>			
		West	North	East	South
♠ K4	♠ QJ975	-	-	pass (1)	pass
♥ AQ106	♥ 7	2NT (2)	pass	3♥ (3)	pass
♦ K4	♦ AJ10976	3♠	pass	4♦ (4)	pass
♣ AK1073	♣ Q	4NT (5)	pass	5♦	pass
		6NT	all pass		

<u>Table B</u>			
West	North	East (me)	South
-	-	pass (1)	pass
1♣ (2)	pass	1♠ (3)	pass
2♥ (4)	pass	3♦ (5)	pass
3NT (6)	all pass		

Table A: (1) This East hand might well consider opening. It conforms with the rule of 20 (it's 21) but I agree with pass – you can probably come in later and describe the hand better.

(2) 2NT is 20 –22, this hand is an excellent 19 and with tenaces galore (you want to be declarer) I would not argue with 2NT on this occasion.

(3) Transfer to ♠'s, fine.

(4) 2nd suit, game forcing.

(5) Now I've been happy with this bidding up to now, but what is 4NT here? West has described his hand and has nothing to spare. With a mis-fit for partner how does West show interest in signing off in 4NT? This is something that regular partnerships need to discuss – what does 4♥ mean here? I would play 4NT as a suggestion to play there and 4♥ (4th suit) as showing slam interest and leaving it up to partner – but it's up to you.

Anyway, this pair could not stop and reached a slam that is less than 50%. Worth waking me up for?

Table B: (1) I also chose to pass with this East hand.

(2) My partner opened 1♣ and I would not disagree.

(3) So should East bid his 6 card ♦ suit or the 5 card ♠ suit? I chose the major.

(4) A reverse, so forcing and fine. 2NT (18-19) is an alternative (which I would choose because both unbid suits are covered with tenaces).

(5) 4th suit forcing. In this case it is also natural.

(6) I have a ♦ stop.

And what happened? The ♥K and ♦Q were both onside and so 6NT made. One other pair bid 6NT but managed to go two down. Most pairs were in the 'best' contract of 3NT.

The bottom lines; -

- It is rarely correct for the crew to ask with Blackwood.
- Know how to stop in 4NT.
- I go to bed early.

Stay low with a mis-fit – part 1Board 10 from Friday 12th, both vul.

West	East (D)	West	North	East	South
♠ AQ10432	♠ -	-	-	pass	pass
♥ -	♥ 65432	1♠	pass	1NT	pass
♦ KQ92	♦ J753	2♠ (1)	pass	2NT (2)	pass
♣ 842	♣ AJ72	3♠ (3)	pass	pass	pass

A silly contract (luckily not doubled - 2♠ was doubled at another table). Let's have a look; -

- (1) West has a choice here, 2♦ or 2♠. If the ♦ suit were ♥'s then I would prefer 2♥, but majors score more than minors and I agree with 2♠.
- (2) So what did you bid at (2) with Hand D in this week's quiz? 2NT is terrible. Partner has a 6 card ♠ suit and it's a mis-fit. You must pass.
- (3) Of course it's difficult to say what West should do when partner bids like this. Bid 3♦ and hope that he comes to his senses? Find a new partner??

And what happened? 3♠ was two down so 200 away for a joint bottom.

The bottom lines: -

- I believe that I am repeating from a previous news-sheet: - *'If partner does not like 1NT, then he won't like 2NT'*.
- I believe that I am repeating from a previous news-sheet: - *'Bail out ASAP with mis-fits'*.

Stay low on a mis-fit – part 2Board 11 from Wednesday 10th, love all

Two out of the 3 tables went overboard on this deal: -

North	South (K)	West	North	East	South
♠ AQ8754	♠ 2	-	-	-	1♥
♥ 8	♥ KJ1062	pass	1♠	pass	2♦
♦ 654	♦ A987	pass	2♠ (1)	pass	pass (2)
♣ 643	♣ KQ9	pass			

- (1) A weak bid with a 6 card suit, you expect partner to pass with a weak hand.
- (2) So what did you bid at (2) with Hand K in this week's quiz? You must pass. Partner's 2♠ bid is weak, showing a decent 6 card suit. It is a mis-fit, you should only bid on if you have a very good hand and can envisage a game.

And what happened? 2♠ made exactly and scored a clear top. 3♠ (-2) and 3NT (-3) were bid at the other tables.

The bottom lines: -

- I believe that I am repeating from a previous news-sheet: - *'Bail out ASAP with mis-fits'*.

Sticking your neck out

Board 5 from Wednesday 10th

Dealer: ♠ A10743
North ♥ 7
N-S vul ♦ K87
♣ 10974

♠ Q965	N	♠ J
♥ K9843	W E	♥ QJ102
♦ Q64	S	♦ 1093
♣ 2		♣ AK653
	♠ K82	
	♥ A65	
	♦ AJ52	
	♣ QJ8	

Table A

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

Table B

West	North(me)	East (F)	South (E)
-	pass	1♣	1NT (1)
pass (2)	2♥ (3)	3♣ (4)	pass
pass	dbl (5)	all pass	

Table A: (1) So what did you bid at (1) with Hand E in this week's quiz? Pass is reasonable but I suspect that most people would wish to bid and so it's 1NT; 15-18 points with a ♣ stop.

(2) When partner opens and RHO overcalls 1NT then the only strong bid is double (penalties). With this West hand I would bid 2♥, non-forcing.

(3) Transfer

(4) Obviously East must pass here, and so the ♥ fit is lost.

Table B: (4) The same up to (4), but what did you bid with Hand F in this week's quiz? This East decided to bid again 'because he had a singleton ♠'. With just 11 points under a strong NT overcaller this is certainly sticking your neck out. Double (showing ♥'s) is the only other reasonable option.

(5) Chop, chop.

And what happened? 3♣ scored its deserved minus 500 for a bottom. 2♠ somehow went minus 1 but still scored an average. 3♥ by West was bid at another table and made +1.

The bottom lines: -

- A 1NT overcall is 15-18.
- If you open and LHO bids 1NT then he has the power. You need a very good hand to bid again if partner is silent.
- If partner opens and RHO overcalls 1NT (15-18) then you generally double (penalties) with 9+ points. Thus a simple suit bid is about 6-8 points and non-forcing, generally a 5+ card suit.

Don't pre-empt your own side!

Board 17 from Wednesday 10th, love all.

North	South
♠ AQ10	♠ 9
♥ K108	♥ Q7
♦ K42	♦ AQJ108753
♣ AQJ4	♣ K5

Table A

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	pass	1♦ (1)
pass	2NT (2)	pass	4♣ (3)
pass	4♠ (4)	pass	6♦
all pass			

Table B

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

- Table A: (1) It's up to your partnership if you respond 1♦ or 2♦ here. In Standard American the jump shift is strong (good suit) and I would bid 2♦.
 (2) 18-19 points. I.e. a hand too strong to open 1NT.
 (3) After partner's last bid is NT, 4♣ asks for aces.
 (4) Two aces.

Table B: (1) What a silly bid! Either 1♦ or 2♦ are forcing and so this just takes away bidding space from partner.

And what happened? 3NT made +4 for a clear bottom. The other tables were in 6♦, making and making +1.

So quite sensible bidding at Table A, but how should the bidding go to reach 6NT? I have two alternatives (depending upon whether South jumps or not): -

Table X

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

Table Y

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	pass	2♦ (1)
pass	3♦ (7)	pass	4NT (8)
pass	5♣ (9)	pass	6NT
all pass			

- Table X: (5) Kings?
 (6) Two.

- Table Y: (1) Good ♦'s, game forcing.
 (7) Agrees ♦'s, obviously forcing.
 (8) RKCB.
 (9) 3 key cards.

The bottom lines: -

- Especially at pairs, don't jump to a suit slam if 6NT may be better.
- A (strong) NT opener is usually best as declarer.
- A new suit by responder is forcing. A jump by responder shows a good suit and is game forcing. A double jump by responder is just silly (unless it is a splinter).
- 4♣ asks for aces after partner's last bid was NT, but ...
- ... 4NT asks for aces (or keycards if you play RKCB) after partner's last bid was a suit.

The help-suit game try

Board 23 from Wednesday 10th, both vul

An excellent game was reached here on minimal values (20 points), let's have a look: -

North (J)	South (C)	West	North(me)	East	South
♠ 9762	♠ KQ10854	-	-	-	1♠
♥ 107	♥ KQ9	pass	2♠	pass	3♦ (1)
♦ KQJ4	♦ A82	pass	4♠ (2)	all pass	
♣ 743	♣ 6				

(1) So what did you bid with Hand C at (1) in this week's quiz? You want to invite game and so 3♠ is the traditional bid. But there is a far better method – the help suit game try. ♠'s are agreed and a bid of 3♦ here asks partner to bid game (4♠) if he can help in the ♦ suit.

(2) This hand is minimum (just 6 points) but that is not important. The important factors are 4 card ♠ support and excellent ♦'s. Partner has asked for ♦ help and you have two important cards for him – so that's enough to go to game.

Note that without the help-suit game try, South would bid 3♠ and North would obviously pass with his minimum.

And what happened? 4♠ made exactly scoring 620. At other tables E-W were playing the contract and conceding just 100.

The bottom lines:

- If you open one of a major and partner supports at the two level, then 2NT, 3♣, 3♦ and a bid of the other major are all game tries. A raise to 3 of the agreed major is also a game try but some players play it as pre-emptive.

What do you open? Pass or 1♥ or 2♥?

Board 21 from Monday 8th, N-S vul.

I was asked what I would open as North in 1st seat on this deal. Now N-S can make 4♥ or 4♠ and E-W can make 4♣ (or 5♣ if the defence get it wrong). Let's have a look: -

Dealer:	♠ K82	West	North (L)	East	South
North	♥ KQ10654	-	2♥ (1)	3♣	3♥ (2)
N-S vul	♦ J1065				
	♣ -		all pass		

♠ J643	N	♠ Q
♥ 92	W E	♥ J73
♦ A843	S	♦ K
♣ A82		♣ KQ1097654
	♠ A10975	
	♥ A8	
	♦ Q972	
	♣ J3	

This was our table. So what did you open with Hand L at (1) in this week's quiz? I chose 2♥ because at this vulnerability (unfavourable) it should be top of the range. However, I would not argue if you say it's too good: the hand is playable in three suits and there may well be a better fit elsewhere. There is, however, one action that I would argue with, and that is pass. I like to play that there is no 'gap' between a one level opening and a two level pre-empt. I.e. with 6-10 (or 6-9 if you prefer) you open two and with 11 (or 10-11) you open one. So I would certainly not pass and either 1♥ or 2♥ are fine by me.

South's raise at (2) made it difficult for West and so ended the auction.

So was it a good result for N-S or not? Without the pre-empt and raise then E-W will surely go to 5♣; maybe making or going one off. So, paradoxically, N-S do best not to find their solid game!

And what happened? 5♣ was bid at 4 tables and made twice. 4♣ was bid and made twice. 3♥ made an overtrick and scored a clear top for N-S.

The bottom lines: -

- Don't have a 'gap' between your opening one and two bids with a 6 card major. If it's too good for a weak two, then open one.
- However, if you have 4 cards in the other major, then don't open a weak two (or weak three). So pass with ♠ Q974 ♥ KQ9765 ♦ J8 ♣ 6 (or ♠ K984 ♥ KJ109873 ♦ Q ♣ 6) and bid your suit later.
- (Some players) follow the above rule but will dismiss a weak 4 card major such as Jxxx.
- So a pre-emptive bid after passing implies a (reasonable) side 4 card major.
- When vul against not, a pre-empt is top of the range.
- When you have a void you can choose Dave's 'rule of 19'. A 1♥ opener is certainly acceptable (maybe better than 2♥) with this Hand L.
- Sometimes you are just lucky, who need science?

Namyats

Board 12 from Friday 12th, N-S vul

West (H)	East (M)
♠ QJ987642	♠ 3
♥ 53	♥ AQJ8
♦ 3	♦ AJ8
♣ Q9	♣ AJ1063

<u>Table A</u>			
West	North	East	South
3♠ (1)	pass	4♠ (2)	all pass

<u>Table B</u>			
West	North	East	South
4♠ (1)	pass	pass (3)	pass

<u>Table C</u>			
West	North	East	South
4♠ (1)	pass	6♠ (4)	all pass

So what did you open with Hand H in this week's quiz? 3♠ or 4♠? At this vulnerability I would like to open 4♠, but not if partner is going to leap off to slam. I'll explain how to avoid this problem later.

- Table A: (1) 3♠ was the most popular choice of opening bid, quite sensible if you can't differentiate between a decent 4 opening and a heap.
(2) And what did you bid at (2) with Hand M in this week's quiz? Everybody got this right. I like to think that some of them may have been influenced by my writings – I bet a number would have bid the poor 3NT a year or so ago?
- Table B: (1) At this vulnerability I agree with a 4♠ opening.
(3) An inspired pass?
- Table C: (4) This East bid slam – quite reasonable opposite most 4♠ openers.

And what happened? The ♣K was onside and so 4♠ made and 6♠ was down. But is there a more scientific approach if West wants to pre-empt at the 4 level?

Hand R	Hand S	
♠ QJ1087642	♠ AKJ109876	Consider these two hands. 4♠ is a very sensible opening with either of these hands, but how do you let partner know that Hand R is purely pre-emptive whereas Hand S would not be adverse to an advance towards slam? The answer is Namyats.
♥ K3	♥ -	
♦ 3	♦ K93	
♣ 92	♣ Q9	

Now you may recall from previous news-sheets that I do not like to open 4♣ or 4♦ with a long minor suit as it goes past 3NT. Thus the bids are spare and are used to differentiate between 'good' and 'bad' 4 of a major openings.

So with Hand R (or our West Hand H) we open 4♠ - a real heap. But with Hand S we open 4♦ - a sound 4♠ opener (4♣ is a sound 4♥). Partner then either bids 4 of the major to sign off or else investigates slam.

Monday 15/11/2004

Friday 19/11/2004

1st Bob/Dave 63 %
 2nd = Clive/Paul 62 %
 2nd = Tomas/Terry 62 %

1st Tomas/Philip(Ire) 74 %
 2nd Phil (UK)/Mike 56 %
 3rd Linda/Paul 56 %

The Friday Club is also moving!

Two weeks running standing outside in the sweltering heat is too much for me, and so the Friday club is also moving *from next Friday!* It will now be the same format as Mondays, 2.00 to about 5.30 and so more boards; and also the exorbitant playing fee of 50 bht.

So the Friday club moves next Friday and the Monday club will move on Dec 6th, both to the Diana Inn on 2nd road opposite the Mike shopping complex and next to Kiss Food. Both clubs will then be non-smoking.

Obviously not everybody is aware of the moves, so I will go to the Amari every Friday at 10.00 am to re-direct people and I will ask for a volunteer (with car) to be at Soi 4 a bit before 2 pm on Mondays in December/January to chauffeur/direct people to the Diana Inn.

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

- | | | |
|----------|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hand A | Hand B | With Hand A partner opens 1♦ and RHO overcalls 2♣, what do you do? |
| ♠ K7 | ♠ 1083 | |
| ♥ KQ95 | ♥ AJ54 | With Hand B partner opens 1♠ and RHO doubles. What do you do? |
| ♦ 10754 | ♦ 92 | |
| ♣ Q53 | ♣ KQ105 | |
| Hand C | Hand D | With Hand C you open 1♥ and partner bids 1♠. What do you bid now? |
| ♠ Q6 | ♠ AK85 | |
| ♥ AK873 | ♥ A10 | (a) What do you open with Hand D? |
| ♦ 94 | ♦ AJ864 | (b) Suppose you open 1♦ and partner bids 1♥, what is your rebid? |
| ♣ AQ82 | ♣ 109 | |
| Hand E | Hand F | With Hand E partner opens 1♥ and you bid 1♠. Partner then bids 2♣, what do you do? |
| ♠ J9872 | ♠ J | |
| ♥ 6 | ♥ K982 | With hand F everybody is vulnerable and: - |
| ♦ A10863 | ♦ KQ743 | (a) RHO opens 1♥, what do you do? |
| ♣ 75 | ♣ 987 | (b) RHO opens 1♠, what do you do? |
| Hand G | Hand H | With Hand G you open 1♠, LHO doubles and partner redoubles. This is passed round to LHO who rescues himself into 2♣. Partner doubles, what do you do? |
| ♠ AQJ95 | ♠ Q1065 | |
| ♥ 972 | ♥ J | |
| ♦ AKJ4 | ♦ 92 | With Hand H it's favourable vulnerability and RHO opens 1♦, what do you do? |
| ♣ 4 | ♣ KJ9872 | |

The re-double

Board 19 from Wednesday 10th

I ran out of room in last week's news-sheet for this one: -

Say you open 1♠, next hand doubles and partner re-doubles. What does partner's re-double mean? Does he have ♠'s? Or does it generally deny a fit? Let's see how it should work: -

Dealer:	♠ 1083				
South	♥ AJ54	West	North (B)	East	South (G)
E-W vul	♦ 92	-	-	-	1♠
	♣ KQ105	dbl (1)	redbl (2)	pass (3)	pass (4)
		2♣	dbl	pass	pass (5)
		pass			
♠ 6	N	♠ K742			
♥ KQ63	W E	♥ 108			
♦ Q1075	S	♦ 863			
♣ A762		♣ J983			
	♠ AQJ95				
	♥ 972				
	♦ AKJ4				
	♣ 4				

- (1) A classic take-out double. Unfortunately West was up against a N-S pair who knew what they were doing.
- (2) So what did you bid with Hand B at (2) in this week's quiz? Redouble is correct; this does not show ♠ support (indeed it often denies it) but is generally looking to double the opponents somewhere as you have the balance of the power.
- (3) 2♣ may be better here – but the result would be the same.
- (4) Obviously South passes to see what nice things can happen.
- (5) And what did you do with this South Hand G at (5) in this week's quiz? Partner wants to defend and you have good top cards that will take tricks in defence, so you trust partner and pass.

And what happened? 2♣ doubled went minus 2 for a top (500) to N-S. Now I would have thought that this would be a standard result if partnerships understand when to penalise the opposition. It appears not. One N-S pair played in 3NT +1 for 430 and the other pair went down in 4♠.

The bottom lines: -

- The re-double does not show strength in partner's suit.
- The re-double shows 9+ points and often a mis-fit for partner. It should have strength in at least two of the unbid suits so that you can subsequently double for penalties if the opponents retreat into one of them. Partner (opener) is expected to co-operate and double any suit bid where he has a decent holding.

Worth a Jump Shift rebid?

Board 8 from Friday 19th

West (D)	East
♠ AK85	♠ QJ92
♥ A10	♥ KJ83
♦ AJ864	♦ K
♣ 109	♣ KQ43

<u>Table A</u>			
West	North	East	South
1♦ (1)	pass	1♥	pass
1♠ (2)	pass	4♠ (3)	all pass

There was a fair bit of discussion about the bidding on this board from Friday: -

<u>Table B</u>			
West	North	East	South
1♦ (1)	pass	1♥	pass
2♠ (2)....			and onto 7♠

- Table A: (1) I guess that most players would open 1♦.
(2) But what is your rebid? What did you rebid at (1) with Hand D(b) in this week's quiz? 2♠ is game forcing and this hand is obviously not good enough. So it really has to be 1♠.
(3) And 4♠ looks right here. The bid shows about 13-15 points and the singleton king in partner's suit is not good.
- Table B: (2) This West overbid with 2♠ at (2) and I believe that there was a subsequent Blackwood mis-understanding.

Anyway, 6♠ is where you want to be (or, at least, where I would want to be), so what went wrong and how should 6♠ be reached?

In my view (but not everybody shares my view) it's the same old problem that I bring up regularly – if you have a (reasonably) balanced hand within your 1NT opening range, then open 1NT. I would open the West hand 1NT and then Stayman followed by a keycard ask should reach 6♠ easily. And why would I open 1NT with two doubletons? Because you do not have a good rebid! The hand is not good enough for 2♠ and 1♠ is usually a much weaker hand.

And what happened? 4♠ was bid and made +2 at 3 tables. 7♠ was one down. 6NT was bid making an overtrick at the last table, I don't know how Jeff/Alex bid it. Clearly this scored a top but I think that 6♠ is a better contract.

The bottom lines: -

- A Jump Shift rebid – so 1♦ - 1♥ - 2♠ here – is game forcing in Standard American and typically about 18+ points.
- So if you have less than 1♦ - 1♥ - 1♠ is anything from 12 to 17. You see the problem? Partner may pass and you miss game (or as here you may miss slam) if you are in the 16-17 point range. That's why I think that
- if you have a balanced hand within your 1NT opening range, then open 1NT.
- If you open 1NT then you never have a rebid problem
- Not everybody shares my views, but with two doubletons I am happy to open 1NT if the 5 card suit is a minor.
- With the above hand I would open 1NT as it is top of the range (it's worth 17) and we may miss something if it goes 1♦ - 1♥ - 1♠. But with just a 15 or poor 16 count I would be happy with this sequence and so would not open 1NT.

A 2-level major suit response is 5+ cards

Board 15 from Friday 19th

Dealer: ♠ A98
North ♥ 1043
N-S vul ♦ KQJ3
♣ A106

♠ J432 N ♠ Q1065
♥ A8762 W E ♥ J
♦ A86 S ♦ 92
♣ 4 ♣ KJ9872
♠ K7
♥ KQ95
♦ 10754
♣ Q53

Table A

West	North	East (H)	South
-	1♦	3♣ (1)	dbl (2)
pass	3NT (3)	all pass	

Table B

West	North	East (H)	South (A)
-	1♦	2♣ (1)	2♥ (4)
2♠ (5)	3♥ (6)	3♠ (7)	4♥ (8)
4♠ (9)	dbl	all pass	

Excellent bidding at one table and
a comedy of errors at another: -

Table A: (1) A weak jump overcall. This would be a fine bid if it were not for the 4 ♠ 's.
(2) A negative double. Now bidding 3♥ or 3♠ here would promise a 5 card suit, so with one or two 4 card majors one should negative double. The hand is a trifle light for the bid (it's at the 3 level) but one often has to push slightly when pre-emption has taken up bidding space.
(3) Happy to bid 3NT.

Table B: (1) Here the overcall was at the two level and so does not deny a 4 card major. It's a bit weak for a 2 level overcall but with good shape and a decent 6 card suit it's acceptable for some partnerships at this vulnerability.
(4) What did you bid at (4) with this South Hand A in this week's quiz? Now this 2♥ bid is wrong. A 2-level response in a major suit promises 5 cards. The correct bid is double (negative). In this particular sequence (1♦ - 2♣ - dbl) the double only promises one 4 card major.
(5) I guess that West was a bit peeved when South stole his bid? Anyway, the 4-4 ♠ fit is (luckily?) uncovered.
(6) And this is why South needs a 5 card suit – North may wish to support with just 3 cards.
(7) Now we are getting up into the danger zone in a competitive auction – and we all know what that means, don't we? – follow the Law! East has 4 card support and partner's 2♠ bid is usually 5 card but only promised 4 ♠ 's. So it's one above the Law but at this vulnerability and with this nice shape it's fine.
(8) But this is not fine. It's terrible! North has promised just 3 card support and rebidding this 4 carder is asking to be doubled for a number. It's 3(!) above the 'safe' Law level, and vulnerable at that.
(9) Obviously this West should partner South some day – it's exactly the same mistake, this time going two above the safe 'Law' level with just 8 trumps. I would simply double and take the money instead of handing it out.

And what happened? 3NT made +2 for the N-S top. 4♠ doubled went 3 down for an undeserved good score to N-S. Other N-S's played in NT partscores. The bottom lines: -

- Obey the Law. One above is OK on a shapely hand but not two (or three!) above.
- A two-level major suit response to partner's opening promises 5 cards.
- Understand negative doubles.

A new suit at the 3 level is a good hand.

Board 4 from Friday 19th

Dealer: ♠ J
West ♥ K982
Both vul ♦ KQ743
 ♣ 987

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

♠ Q432	N	♠ K6
♥ AQJ107	W E	♥ 65
♦ A5	S	♦ J98
♣ K3		♣ AQJ1065
	♠ A109875	
	♥ 43	
	♦ 1062	
	♣ 42	

- (1) So what did you do with this North Hand F at (1) in this week's quiz? I would pass as I prefer a stronger hand for a two-level vulnerable overcall. And remember what I said last week about a double not necessarily being stronger than an overcall? Suppose that West had opened 1♠, then I would not argue if you chose a rather light double with this North hand, a matter of style. Anyway, I don't like 2♦.
- (2) 3♣ here is (game) forcing. A good bid; 3♦ (stop ask) is a good alternative.
- (3) It's a nice ♠ suit but this hand is not strong enough to come in at the 3-level, especially when the opponents have advertised game-going values. Mind you, it's a sensible bid if you and your partner agree that it shows a hand like this after the opponents have shown the power – it can only be weak if RHO has his 3♣ bid.
- (4) West has a pleasant choice, double or 3NT. 3NT is probably best.
- (5) Now North may well have expected something more from partner but this double is silly. E-W were an experienced pair and they have happily bid to 3NT. What's more, North's original outing (2♦) was very dubious. Time to keep quiet.

And what happened? 3NT obviously made easily and so scored a top because of the double. 3NT was bid at 3 other tables; making, making +1 and going one down (impossible unless you are greedy?). At the 5th table South was doubled in 2♠ (-1).

The bottom lines: -

- A two-level overcall should be about opening strength, especially if only 5 card; and especially especially if vulnerable.
- If partner's opening is overcalled and you have to bid at the 3 level, then you need a good hand (about opening strength) as it's (game) forcing.
- If the opponent's bid happily to 3NT then don't double unless you have an unpleasant surprise for them.

Preference with a singleton

Board 11 from Friday 10th, N-S vul

North (E)	South (C)
♠ J9872	♠ Q6
♥ 6	♥ AK873
♦ A10863	♦ 94
♣ 75	♣ AQ82

Table A

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

Table B

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

A tricky deal which failed to make it into last week's news-sheet as I ran out of space.

Lets look at two tables: -

Table A: (1) What did you rebid at (1) with Hand C in this week's quiz? You don't particularly like partner's ♠ suit and he has only promised about 6 points; 2♣ is quite sufficient.
(2) And what did you bid with Hand E at (2) in this week's quiz? Very difficult! You need a reasonable 6 card suit to rebid 2♠ and 2♦ would be forcing, whether you play it as natural or not. So that just leaves pass or 2♥. I prefer 2♥.

Table B: (1) 3♣ is a gross overbid.
(3) North has the same problem but one level higher.
(4) And a silly contract is reached. At the end of the hand South 'tried a Chuck' – saying that North should pass the opening 1♥ bid. This North hand must respond in my view and South has only himself to blame for the poor result.

The bottom lines: -

- Do not pass partner's opening with a singleton if you can dig up a bid.
- A jump shift rebid (so 3♣ here) is game forcing in Standard American and should be about 18+ pts.
- Simple preference may even be with just a singleton support.

Alerting Stayman?

West(me)	North	East	South
1NT	pass	2♣	pass
2♠	pass	pass	?? (1)

Now I have often said that the Alert rules are continually changing and vary from country to country. As far as I know the current rule for Stayman is that it only needs to be alerted if it does not guarantee a 4 card major (as when playing 4-way transfers). Now I was West and N-S were a French couple. At (1) South asked me what was going on and I explained that my partner's 2♣ bid promised zero points. South said that then it should have been alerted as such. That is apparently the situation in France (where Stayman usually promises at least 8 points) but not in the UK, USA or Pattaya (where Garbage Stayman is the most popular variation).

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: Double (negative). If you do not play negative doubles then you have to choose between 2NT (which denies a ♥ suit) and 2♦ or 3♦ (when a ♥ fit may again be lost). Playing negative doubles it's easy. After 1♦ - 2♣ a negative double promises a good 10 + points and at least one 4 card major.
- Hand B: Redouble. 9+ points and interest in penalising the opponents somewhere (you will double a run into ♣'s or ♥'s and hope that partner will be able to double ♦'s).
- Hand C: 2♣. It's not good enough for 3♣ which is game forcing in Standard American.
- Hand D: (a) 1♦ or 1NT. Now I suspect that most will choose 1♦ and that is not incorrect, but this is a very good 16 (it's worth 17 – especially if there is a ♠ fit) and the problem is that if you open 1♦ and partner responds 1♥, then what do you do
(b) 1♠. Ugh! There is no good bid now. 2♠ is a game forcing 18+. So you have to bid 1♠ which is thus 12-17 and it will sometimes be difficult to show your maximum.
Life would have been so much easier after a 1NT opening.
- Hand E: 2♥. It's horrible but this bid does not promise ♥ support. It is simple preference and simply means that you don't like ♣'s.
- Hand F: (a) Pass. The hand is not good enough for a two-level overcall and the fact that an opponent has ♥'s means that there's no fit with partner there.
(b) Pass or double. I suspect that most will pass. But this time the opponent's opening means that it's more likely that you have a decent fit somewhere with partner and I like the frisky double if that's your partnership style.
- Hand G: Pass. Partner wants to defend and there is no reason to believe that he has ♦'s or ♠'s. You have good top cards which will take tricks in defence and must trust partner.
- Hand H: Pass. An interesting one where 2♣ and 3♣ were both bid at the table. Now I would bid a weak 3♣ if it were not for the 4 card ♠ suit – you may have a ♠ fit with partner and a pre-empt will make it impossible to reach. I have much more sympathy with a bid of 2♣ – it's not really strong enough but it does have good shape and a reasonable suit and so is not too bad at favourable vulnerability.

Monday 22/11/2004

Friday 26/11/2004

1st Tomas/Jim 61 %
 2nd Alex/Jeff 61 %

1st Alex/Jeff 58 %
 2nd Bob/Dave 55 %

Don't Forget

Next Monday we move to the Diana Inn, so we will be playing at the Diana Inn on both Mondays and Fridays from 2.00 from now on.

There is also a group of players who meet at 2.00 on Wednesday (again now at the Diana Inn). This format is slightly different as I like to get a game myself, but I understand that there will always be somebody prepared to not play if there is an odd number of players. So come along.

We had our first session at the Diana Inn on Friday and although slightly cramped it was otherwise excellent and there will be no problem when we get more tables – we can expand into the adjacent area and handle about 40 tables!

Richard and I tried the buffet dinner (160 bht) after the session and we can thoroughly recommend it – excellent.

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

Hand A

Hand B

With Hand A RHO opens 2♥ (weak), what do you do?

♠ J8

♠ J65

♥ AJ7

♥ 1086

With Hand B partner opens 1♠, what do you bid?

♦ AQ976

♦ KQ105

♣ AK5

♣ KQ5

Hand C

Hand D

With Hand C partner opens 1NT. You transfer and partner bids 2♠, what do you do now?

♠ AJ1083

♠ K875

♥ A96

♥ J4

With Hand D partner opens 2NT. So you bid 3♣ Stayman: -

♦ A10

♦ A98

(a) what do you bid if he responds 3♦ ?

♣ Q98

♣ Q752

(b) what do you bid if he responds 3♠ ?

(c) what do you bid if he responds 3♥ ?

Understanding Blackwood and Gerber - 1

Board 7 from Wednesday 24th

Dealer: ♠ AJ1083
South ♥ A96
both vul ♦ A10
♣ Q98

♠ Q5 N ♠ 97
♥ 1074 W E ♥ QJ3
♦ QJ862 S ♦ 754
♣ J76 ♣ 105432

♠ K642
♥ K852
♦ K93
♣ AK

Table A:

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

Table B:

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1NT
2♦ (6)	3NT (7)	all pass	

A bit of a mix-up here at Table A and ludicrous bidding at Table B, let's have a look: -

- Table A: (1) This South simply accepted the transfer, with 4 ♠'s and excellent top cards I would super-accept with 3♠.
- (2) This is quantitative. Partner may pass or bid 5♠ to play. 6NT and 6♠ are obviously simply to play and South may introduce a 5 card suit if he wishes in order to suggest slam in that suit.
- (3) South, however, took 4NT as Roman Key Card Blackwood and so gave the 2 key card response.
- (4) North assumed that South had a maximum with 5 good ♥'s and was suggesting a ♥ slam.
- (5) South knows of the 5-4 ♠ fit but with every suit covered and no obvious weakness he chose 6NT because it was pairs scoring.
- Table B: (6) Even at favourable vulnerability this overcall of a strong NT is absurd.
- (7) But North no longer has a transfer available. 2♠ here would be weak (to play) but 3♠ (forcing) is available. Double (penalties) is also a very sound option.

And what happened? 12 tricks are obviously easy. The third table also bid to 6NT.

The bottom lines: -

- When partner opens 1NT then you need about a good 16-17 points to *invite* slam. With more you can check on aces/key cards and bid slam.
- Note that this North hand is not just 15 points – it's worth much more. Three aces, a good 5 card suit, two tens and ample intermediates make the hand worth about 17 points.
- 4♣ is the ace ask after partner's last bid was NT.
- 4♣ is also the ace (or key-card) ask after a transfer is simply accepted.
- 4NT is quantitative in both of the above cases.
- Aces and kings are good cards, quacks are not.

Just to clarify what's what after a transfer, here's an extract from news-sheet 63: -

- 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 4♣ asks for aces (RKCB)
- 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 4NT is quantitative
- 1NT - 2♦ - 3♥ - 4♣ is a cue bid - the same for any super-accept (or a 2nd suit according to partnership agreement).
- 1NT - 2♦ - 3♥ - 4NT asks for aces (RKCB)

Understanding Blackwood and Gerber - 2

Board 21 from Wednesday 24th

Dealer: ♠ 10942

North ♥ K985

N-S vul ♦ J64

♣ 106

♠ AQJ63

N

♠ K875

♥ Q73

W E

♥ J4

♦ KQ

S

♦ A98

♣ AK4

♣ Q752

♠ -

♥ A1062

♦ 107532

♣ J983

West	North	East (D)	South
-	pass	pass	pass
2NT	pass	4♣ (1)	pass
4♠ (2)	pass	4NT (3)	pass
5♥ (4)	pass	6NT (5)	all pass

Now this East was North at the previous deal. Then he had '15' points and missed slam opposite partner's 1NT opening. So this time, with 10 points opposite a 2NT opening he drove to slam. Sensible? Let's have a look.

- (1) 4♣ here is Gerber. This hand should, of course, bid 3♣ Stayman and then 4♠ if a fit is located or else 3NT. There is a mechanism (Puppet Stayman) for locating both 4 card and 5 card majors after partner has opened 2NT but it's best left to more experienced players.
- (2) Two aces.
- (3) Apparently this pair had agreed that this asked for kings. I asked how they signed off in 4NT and they said that they did not – presumably the ace and king asks are to help the opposition as slam is always going to be bid anyway?
- (4) Two kings.
- (5) Now I believe that East could have signed off in 5NT here in their system (?). There is an ace and a king missing but that really is not important – this is a flattish East hand with no known fit and two unsupported quacks and should not even be inviting slam, yet alone jumping right in.

And what happened? 6NT went minus two. 4♠ was +1 and 6♠ -1 at other tables.

The bottom lines.

- When you have used 4♣ as the ace ask, then 5♣ asks for kings and 4NT is to play.
- If partner opens 2NT (or 1NT) and you have a 4 card major, then bid Stayman to look for a fit. You can then subsequently ask about aces/key cards.
- If partner opens 2NT (20-22) then without a fit or a long suit you need a good 11-12 points to *invite* slam. This East hand is not even worth an invite. Note that even with this super maximum and super-fitting West hand, slam fails.
- Remember, with no fit or long suit then you need a total of 34 pts for 6NT.
- This East hand is an average 10 count, no more, and is nowhere near good enough to even think about slam.

Notice the difference between this deal and the previous one; both have a combined 31 points and both have a 5-4 ♠ fit. Slam fails on the second because of quacks instead of top cards.

Partscore or slam?Board 16 from Friday 26th

Dealer: ♠ J65
 West ♥ 1086
 E-W vul ♦ KQ105
 ♣ KQ5

♠ Q94 N ♠ 82
 ♥ Q975 W E ♥ K3
 ♦ 986 S ♦ J43
 ♣ J102 ♣ A98763

♠ AK1073
 ♥ AJ42
 ♦ A72
 ♣ 4

Table A

West	North(B)	East	South
-	-	pass	1♠
pass	3♠ (1)	pass	4NT (2)
pass	5♣	pass	5♠
all pass			

5♠ is too high here, so what went wrong?

- (1) So what did you bid at (1) in this week's quiz? It's 11 points and a 3♠ bid here would be 11-12, but is this North hand worth 3♠? It is dubious – it is aceless and totally flat (no ruffing value) and the ♠ suit is just 3 card and is rather weak, I would settle for 2♠. But one important point – a direct bid of 3♠ here should promise 4♠'s; with a hand that is worth a raise to 3♠ but with only 3 card trump support then bid 2 of a minor first (so 2♦ here) and then bid 3♠ - this differentiates between 3 and 4 card support.
- (2) And should South go looking for slam here? It's fairly close, give partner something like ♠Q965 ♥K9 ♦KQ105 ♣653 and slam is better than 50%. However, this example hand is 'ideal' in that there are no wasted ♣ honours; on average slam will not be there and South should simply settle for 4♠.

And what happened? 5♠ was minus two; one pair bid 6♠ (minus three) and a third pair played in 2♠ making +2. Only Linda/Kaj got it right (4♠ making exactly).

The bottom lines: -

- Know how to differentiate between 3 and 4 card support with a limit raise (to 3) for partner's major - with 4 card support bid 3 of the major directly, with 3 card support bid a minor first. If you play 2/1 then the 3 card raise is shown via a forcing NT.
- Deduct a point for a totally flat hand.
- Downgrade a hand with just 3 card trump support, especially if you have weak trumps and no ruffing potential.

If 3NT is a sensible option – then bid it.

Board 3 from Monday 22nd

Dealer: ♠ J8
South ♥ AJ7
E-W vul ♦ AQ976
♣ AK5

Table A
West North(A) East South
- - - pass
2♥ 3♦ (1) all pass

♠ A107 N ♠ K6542
♥ KQ9865 W E ♥ 32
♦ J S ♦ 84
♣ 643 ♣ Q972
♠ Q93
♥ 104
♦ K10532
♣ J108

Table B
West North(A) East South
- - - pass
2♥ dbl (1) pass 3♦
pass 5♦ all pass

Table C
West North(A) East South
- - - pass
2♥ 3NT(1) all pass

Table A: (1) So what did you bid with this North Hand A at (1) in this week's quiz? 3♦ is a poor bid – you don't want to play in ♦'s (at any level) with these ♥ stops.

Table B: (1) And double is equally bad – what do you do over 2♠/3♣/3♦? A double of a 2♥ bid guarantees ♠'s unless it's very strong and you bid again. Double followed by 3NT would show an enormous hand (about 22+).

Table C: (1) This 3NT was bid at 4 tables – spot on.

And what happened? 3NT was bid at 4 tables and made exactly. 3♦ was bid at two tables and made exactly for a poor score. 5♦ was down two for the undisputed bottom.

Bidding Quiz Answers

Hand A: 3NT. With a double ♥ stop 3NT is clearly best. 2NT would show a slightly weaker hand (about 15-18) and 3♦ is a very poor bid – because 3NT is likely to be the best contract and partner cannot possibly have a ♥ stop. Double is pointless.

Hand B: 2♠. The hand is not worth a raise to 3♠ (via 2♦ to show just 3 card support) because of the flat shape, no ruffing values and just 3 weak trumps. 1NT is a reasonable alternative – it's not worth 2NT for the same reasons.

Hand C: 4NT – quantitative. You need a good 16-17 points to invite slam opposite a strong NT, and this hand is worth it. It's not good enough to insist upon slam (4♣ would ask for aces/key cards) and 3NT is a bit feeble.

Hand D: (a) 3NT, it's nowhere good enough to even think about slam.
(b) 4♠, this time there's a fit but it's not quite good enough to investigate slam.
(c) 3NT, and pass if partner converts to 4♠.

Monday 29/11/2004

Wednesday 1/12/2004

Friday 3/12/2004

1 st Gerard/Derek(AUS)	60%	1 st Mike/Phil	59%	1 st Tom/Derek(UK)	61%
2 nd Bob/Dave	59%	2 nd Gerard/Derek(AUS)	54%	2 nd Jim/Ian	58%

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

Hand A

Hand B

♠ J5

♠ 85

♥ K42

♥ 983

♦ Q7

♦ A943

♣ KQ9762

♣ A754

(a) What do you open with Hand A? Suppose that you pass, partner opens 1♦, you bid 2♣ and partner bids 2NT(12-14).
 (b) What now?

With Hand B partner opens 1NT, what do you bid?

Hand C

Hand D

♠ Q63

♠ AQ2

♥ AKQ7

♥ A983

♦ Q52

♦ J1095

♣ Q98

♣ J5

What do you open with Hand C?

With Hand D you open 1♦ and partner bids 2♣. What is your rebid?

Hand E

Hand F

♠ AK93

♠ K106

♥ AK7

♥ K108762

♦ K63

♦ QJ8

♣ J105

♣ 10

What do you open with Hand E?

With Hand F you open 2♥. LHO overcalls 3♣ and partner bids 3♥, what do you do?

Hand G

With Hand G you open 1♣ and partner responds 1♠.
 What is your rebid?

♠ Q3

♥ AQ10

♦ J3

♣ AKJ765

Lonely Queens

Board 11 from Monday 29th, love all

West (C)	East (B)
♠ Q63	♠ 85
♥ AKQ7	♥ 983
♦ Q52	♦ A943
♣ Q98	♣ A754

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

2NT is a miserable contract that went two or three down at most tables, who's fault? When dummy appeared at this table declarer quickly told his partner that he needed 9 points for the raise and that he should have passed. This is rubbish of course, what he meant to say was that he himself had a miserable hand for his 1NT opener – did you open 1NT with Hand C in this week's quiz? I believe that 7 players did on Monday; sometimes I wonder why I bother – surely everybody knows about 4333 type shape by now?

And what did you bid at (1) with Hand B in this week's quiz? Now the 'norm' for raising 1NT to 2NT is 8-9 points; this East hand is 8 points but aces are good cards and especially good in long suits. I think that the 2NT bid is fine. So why is it such a poor contract? Opener has a balanced 15 points doesn't he?

I've been over this a few times; hand evaluation is more than just counting points. Consider a hand ♠ AKQJ1098765432 ♥ - ♦ - ♣ - . It's 10 points, so pass? Of course not. You have to add up your points and then make adjustments. And one adjustment that I keep on harping on about is to deduct a point for 4333 shape. Seems the message has not got through as 6 pairs reached miserable 2NT (or 3NT!) contracts with these cards. I would open 1♣ and rebid 1♥ over 1♦ or 1NT(12-14) over 1♠.

And the other negative factor about this West hand is the unsupported queens: -

About Qxx

If you have read anything on hand evaluation you will know that Qxx is a poor holding. I mentioned this in my leaflet about Hand Evaluation - it's an appendix in the 2003 yearbook. To demonstrate my point, look at these two holdings in the ♦ and ♣ suits: -

Deal 1		Deal 2	
West	East	West	East
♦ Qxx	♦ Kxx	♦ xxx	♦ KQx
♣ Kxx	♣ Qxx	♣ KQx	♣ xxx

Suppose that you are playing in a NT contract, which deal would you prefer to have?

The answer is deal 2. In both cases you have two certain tricks; with deal 1 that's it but with deal two you make two tricks in a suit by leading up to the honours if the ace is onside. So Kxx opposite Qxx makes just one trick, but KQx opposite xxx averages 1½ tricks. Think about it; with Deal 1 you make 2 tricks, with Deal 2 you make anything from 2-4 tricks with an expectation of 3 tricks – so 1 more trick from the same number of points.

Anyway, the point is that Qxx is a poor holding; unsupported honours are bad, touching honours are good.

The bottom lines: -

- Deduct a point for totally flat 4333 type hands.
- Devalue a Qxx holding.

Points Smoints

Board 21 from Monday 29th, N-S vul.

With the last deal we saw that 2NT made just 5 or 6 tricks with a combined 23 points, but things are much different when there is a bit of shape, look at this 23 count: -

North (A)	South (D)	West	North(me)	East	South
♠ J5	♠ AQ2	-	pass (1)	pass	1♦ (2)
♥ K42	♥ A983	pass	2♣ (3)	pass	2NT (4)
♦ Q7	♦ J1095	pass	3NT (5)	all pass	
♣ KQ9762	♣ J5				

- (1) A borderline opener (it conforms to the rule of 20) but I chose to pass.
- (2) A minimal but fine opener.
- (3) Certainly good enough for a 2-level response.
- (4) And what did you bid at (4) with Hand D in this week's quiz? 2NT is correct, it shows 12-14 points. Note that this is not denying a 4 card major – to bid 2♥ here would be a reverse showing 16+ points and forcing.
- (5) Now when North bid 2♣ at (3) he had to know what to do if south bids 2NT. What did you bid at (5) in this week's quiz? I had already decided upon 3NT. Now the 'points pundits' will say that 11 opposite 12-14 is not a good bet, and they are right. But this hand is worth far more than 11 points now that partner has bid NT – that ♣ suit is glorious.

And what happened? 3NT made comfortably. It scored a complete top as none of the other 7 tables bid it. Seems too many people simply count points and don't adjust for shape?

I note that 3 pairs played in 3♣ (poor show – I hope that nobody opened 3♣, it's too good) and others were in ridiculous contracts like 3♦ and 4♥.

The bottom lines: -

- ♣ KQxxxx is worth far more than 5 points, especially if partner bids NT.

Don't bid again after pre-empting

Board 16 from Friday 3rd, E-W vul.

North (F)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ K106	♠ Q732	pass	2♥	3♣	3♥
♥ K108762	♥ QJ5	pass	4♥ (1)	all pass	
♦ QJ8	♦ 97				
♣ 10	♣ A763				

- (1) So what did you do with this North Hand F at (1) in this week's quiz? I hope you passed. Partner's 3♥ bid is not an invitation for you to bid on. He is the captain and may have anything for his 3♥ bid.

And what happened? Nine tricks were made. 3♥ would have scored a near top, 4♥ minus one scored a near bottom.

The bottom line. Once you have pre-empted you have said your hand, partner is then the captain and makes any further decisions.

3NT is too high

Board 19 from Wednesday 1st, N-S vul.

North (E)	South
♠ AK93	♠ J64
♥ AK7	♥ 54
♦ K63	♦ 1075
♣ J105	♣ KQ974

Tables A & B

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

Table C

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
pass	1♦ (1)	pass	1NT
pass	2NT (5)	pass	3NT
all pass			

Table D

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

The ♣A was trippleton and 3NT went anything from one to three down. So just unlucky or is something wrong with the bidding at Tables A-C? Let's have a look: -

- Table A/B: (1) So what did you open with Hand E in this week's quiz? Three out of the four North's on Wednesday decided it was too good for 1NT and so opened either 1♣ or 1♦ with a view to jumping to 2NT over a one level response.
(2) 2♣ is obvious here (3♣ if you play inverted minors).
(3) This shows a good 17-19 points.
(4) And with this great ♣ suit I too would bid 3NT.

- Table C: (1) ♦'s are the 'better' suit, but when equal length in the minors I always open 1♣ as at Tables A & B.
(2) 2NT over partner's 1NT again shows a good 17-19 points.

- Table D: (1) But I was North at this table. There is a very simple 'rule' – deduct a point for the totally flat 4333 type shape. This hand has nice top cards but is not quite worth 18 points in my view so I opened 1NT (15-17).

And what happened? 1NT just made and 3NT was hopeless except at one table where West failed to hold up the ♣A with ♣Axx when ♣KQ974 were in full view in dummy.

The bottom lines: -

- Deduct a point for the totally flat 4333 type shape.
- If you want to open a minor and are equal length (3-3 or 4-4) then always open 1♣. It was not significant here but in other scenarios it makes partner's bidding much easier.
- If dummy has a long suit then it is usually best to hold up the ace when defending a NT contract, especially if there is no outside entry.

Bid a Two card suit?

Board 12 from Friday 3rd, N-S vul.

West	East (G)	West	North	East	South
♠ AJ742	♠ Q3	pass	pass	1♣	pass
♥ 72	♥ AQ10	1♠	pass	2♦ (1)	pass
♦ 10752	♦ J3	pass (2)	pass		
♣ 82	♣ AKJ765				

What a silly contract, and East tried to blame West!

- (1) So what did you rebid with Hand G at (1) in this week's quiz? There are three sensible options – 3NT, 3♣ or 2NT. 2♦ is a reverse and shows a big hand with 4♦'s.
- (2) Pass is obviously very sensible if you have not agreed that a reverse is forcing.

And what happened? 2♦ made exactly with 3NT making at other tables.

Now this East is the same comedian who opened 1♣ (acceptable) and then rebid 2♣ (not acceptable) holding ♠AJ98 ♥QJ75 ♦A96 ♣104 (news sheet 81). You may recall that Hans tried to defend this individual (Jeff), saying that he does not try to mislead people – really! How would you describe this 2♦ bid? Misleading is an understatement – as this appears to be a recurrent event the culprit has been warned, repeated psyches are unacceptable at this club. It's not as though there was no other bid – I've mentioned three quite reasonable ones and reversing into a *good* 3 card suit (so 3♥ here) is also acceptable.

Understanding Gerber

Board 8 from Friday 3rd, N-S vul.

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ K1076	♠ Q	pass	1♣	pass	1♥ (1)
♥ K	♥ AQJ84	pass	2NT (2)	pass	4♣ (3)
♦ AK5	♦ QJ982	pass	4♦ (4)	pass	4NT (5)
♣ KQJ73	♣ 84	pass	5♣ (6)	all pass	

What a silly contract, what went wrong?

- (1) 1♥ is correct here, bid 5-5's from the top down.
- (2) 18-19 pts. Fine.
- (3) 4♣ is ace-asking here. 3♦ (forcing) is an alternative.
- (4) North mistakenly thought that this showed one ace.
- (5) As I mentioned last week, 4NT is a sign off once Gerber has been used.
- (6) After a long pause – he had no idea what to do.

And what happened? 5♣ scored a bottom as 3NT made 11 tricks comfortably at other tables.

The bottom lines: -

Responses to Gerber

4♦ =	0 or 4 aces
4♥ =	1 ace
4♠ =	2 aces
4NT =	3 aces

After one of these responses, 5♣ asks for kings (similar replies) and 4NT is to play.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: (a) 1♣ or pass. It's borderline and either is acceptable. 3♣ is unacceptable as the hand is too good.
(b) 3NT. This ♣ suit is great now that partner has bid NT, 3♣ is pathetic.
- Hand B: 2NT. Invitational, 8-9 points. Pass is acceptable if you're in a pessimistic mood.
- Hand C: 1♣. This hand is not worth a 1NT opener. You should deduct a point for the totally flat 4333 type shape. Also Quacks are bad and a Qxx holding is especially bad. Don't believe me? Then why did this Hand C make just six tricks opposite Hand B?
- Hand D: 2NT. This is 12-14 points. You should not bid 2♥ as that is a forcing reverse and promises 5+ ♦'s, 4 ♥'s and 16+ points.
- Hand E: 1NT. Deduct a point for the 4333 shape.
- Hand F: Pass. Partner's 3♥ bid is not an invitation for you to bid. You have said your hand and he's in charge.
- Hand G: Either 3♣ or 2NT (18-19 pts) or 3NT (good long suit). Any of these are fine, but the silly 2♦ bid chosen by one experienced player is not. If you really want to reverse with this hand then 2♥ is an acceptable bid – it is sometimes OK to reverse into a good 3 card suit but Jx is not acceptable. And which option do I prefer? I would bid 3NT or 2♥ (provided it is forcing).

Count Your Cards – or get a zero

How many times do I cave to repeat this simple **rule**? You should count your cards, face down, before looking at them. We had yet another incident on Friday when a hand was bid and played out to the very end when it was discovered that one player had 14 cards and another 12. This really is a waste of everybody's time and they received a zero score, as did the pair before them who mis-boarded it.

♣ ♦ Club News Sheet – No. 110

10/12/2004 ♥ ♠

Monday 6/12/04	N-S winners	E-W winners
	1 st Hans(AU)/Jeff 69 %	1 st Richard/William 63 %
	2 nd Philip(Ire)/Tomas 56 %	2 nd Mike(Can)/Phil(UK) 55 %
Wednesday 8/12/04	1 st Tomas/Mike(Can) 59 %	2 nd Clive/Terry 55 %
Friday 8/12/04	N-S winners	E-W winners
	1 st Beryl/Margit 57 %	1 st Gerard/Derek 54 %
	2 nd Austin/partner 55 %	2 nd Alex/Jeff 53 %

Bidding Quiz

Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A RHO opens 1♥, what do you bid?
♠ KQJ754	♠ 754	With Hand B (a) what would you respond if partner opens 1♦?
♥ 3	♥ QJ6	(b) suppose that partner opens 1♣ and you bid 1♦, then what
♦ K5	♦ AQJ8	would you do if partner then bids 1♠?
♣ K952	♣ AK6	
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C LHO opens 3♣, partner bids 3♦ and RHO bids
♠ 1098	♠ K10753	4♣. What do you do?
♥ J5	♥ K10	With Hand D LHO opens 1♦ and partner doubles. What do
♦ KQ10765	♦ Q	you bid?
♣ A8	♣ AQ976	
Hand E	Hand F	Suppose that you open Hand E with 1♦ (I would open 1♣ but
♠ AKQ6	♠ AK5	that's not the issue here). Anyway, partner responds 2♣ to your
♥ K	♥ 65	1♦ opening, what is your rebid?
♦ 7642	♦ QJ92	(a) What do you open with Hand F?
♣ J1073	♣ A1098	(b) Suppose you open 1♣, partner bids 1♥, you bid 1NT and
		partner bids 2♣. What do you do?
Hand G	Hand H	With Hand G partner opens 1NT and RHO overcalls 2♣, what
♠ Q10852	♠ Q103	do you do?
♥ KJ85	♥ K1073	With Hand H partner opens 1♣ and you bid 1♥. Partner then
♦ 1092	♦ K5	bids 1NT, what do you do?
♣ 7	♣ Q632	
Hand J		<u>What opening lead?</u>
♠ 1098763		With Hand J RHO opens 1♠ so you pass. LHO passes and
♥ Q		partner doubles. You choose to convert partner's take-out
♦ KQ10		double into penalties by passing – fine. But what do you lead?
♣ A82		

Michaels with a mis-fit

Board 7 from Monday 6th

Dealer: ♠ A9862
South ♥ Q2
Both vul ♦ 10943
♣ Q8

♠ KQJ754	N	♠ 3
♥ 3	W E	♥ 9865
♦ K5	S	♦ AQ8762
♣ K952		♣ 43

♠ 10
♥ AKJ1074
♦ J
♣ AJ1076

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

- (1) What did you bid with this West Hand (A) in this week's quiz? 2♥ was a Michaels Cue Bid, showing 5 ♠'s and a 5 card minor. But, as usual when I write up a use of this convention, it has again been abused. With a good 6 card ♠ suit I would simply overcall 1♠. Michaels is best bid with 5-5's. 5-4 is possibly acceptable if the 4 card minor is a reasonable suit but a 6-4 hand is definitely unsuitable. Also, in my style, I would consider this hand too strong for Michaels.
- (2) East has a problem here. Obviously he would want to play in 3♦ but is a 3♦ bid here forcing? 2NT would ask for partner's minor but if he bids 3♣ would 3♦ then be forcing? Obviously these are questions that an experienced pair need to know the answers to. East chose to simply sign off in the known 5-1 ♠ 'fit'.
- (3) I don't like this 3♠ bid. Partner may have been fixed (as here). If you like this ♠ suit (I do) then you should have overcalled with it.
- (4) East took the view here that if South has ♣'s then his partner may have ♦'s.
- (5) I would pass here. East has attempted to sign off in 2♠ and surely does not want to play in game. I can only repeat what I said above, if you like this ♠ suit then overcall it at (1).

And what happened? 4♠ went two down but E-W got an (undeserved?) above average score as N-S can make 11 tricks in ♥'s.

The bottom lines.

- Do not abuse the Michaels convention. A 6 card ♠ suit like ♠KQJxxx is too good.
- A Michaels 2♥ over 1♥ shows a 5 card ♠ suit and an unspecified minor. The minor should also be 5 card (you are up at the 3 level).
- Know how to show a weak hand when partner bids Michaels.
- When you pre-empt (Michaels is a pre-empt) then do not bid again (twice!). Partner is the captain.

Responding to partner's Take Out double

Board 2 from Monday 6th

Dealer: ♠ K10753
East ♥ K10
N-S vul ♦ Q
♣ AQ976

♠ 9	N	♠ AJ6
♥ 9654	W E	♥ J72
♦ J98752	S	♦ AK1043
♣ 103		♣ J2
	♠ Q842	
	♥ AQ83	
	♦ 6	
	♣ K854	

Table A

West	North (D)	East	South
-	-	1♦	dbl (1)
pass (2)	2♠ (3)	pass	pass (4)
3♦ (5)	pass (6)	pass	3♠
pass	pass (7)	pass	

Table B

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	dbl (1)
3♦ (2)	4♠ (3)	dbl (8)	pass
pass (9)	pass		

- Table A: (1) A classic take-out double, playable in the other 3 suits.
(2) This West chose to pass, I would bid a pre-emptive 3♦ (and be prepared to go higher).
(3) Now this is wrong, 2♠ is not forcing. It shows an invitational hand, about 11-12 points. What did you bid with this North Hand D in this week's quiz? This hand is good enough to insist upon game opposite a take-out double and 4♠ is correct. Partner has promised ♠'s (or a *very* good hand). With a similar strength hand but only 4 ♠'s then the correct bid is a cue bid of 2♦ followed by a ♠ bid – game forcing and showing just 4 ♠'s (or a poor 5).
(4) Pass is correct here. This is a minimum double and partner's 2♠ bid should show about 11 points.
(5) The right bid at the wrong time! West should pass here – he knows that N-S can probably make game!
(6&7) But North declined his 2nd and 3rd chances to bid game.

- Table B: (2) This West got his 3♦ bid in at the correct time.
(3) But this North correctly bid game.
(8) A very poor double. Partner has promised nothing (except long ♦'s so that you know the ♦AK will not hold up).
(9) At this vulnerability West has a very sound sacrifice in 5♦, but partner says that he can set 4♠

And what happened? 4♠ was doubled at two tables and made comfortably.

The bottom lines: -

- In response to partner's take-out double a non jump in a suit is about 0-9 points.
- A jump shows an invitational hand.
- With a stronger hand (about 13+) then insist upon game. Bid game in a 5 card major or else cue bid and then bid a 4 card major (game forcing).
- Do not double a freely bid game unless you have an unpleasant surprise for the opponents. Two aces and a king is not a surprise.

That 4333 shape again

Board 12 from Wednesday 8th

Dealer: ♠ AKQ6
West ♥ K
N-S vul ♦ 7642
♣ J1073

♠ 10932	N	♠ J8
♥ A10732	W E	♥ 9854
♦ 103	S	♦ K95
♣ Q5		♣ 9842
	♠ 754	
	♥ QJ6	
	♦ AQJ8	
	♣ AK6	

Table A:

West	North(E)	East	South(B)
pass	1♦ (1)	pass	2♣ (2)
pass	2♠ (3)	pass	4NT (4)
pass	5♦	pass	6NT (5)
all pass			

Table B:

West	North	East	South(B)
pass	1♣ (1)	pass	1♦ (6)
pass	1♠ (7)	pass	3NT (8)
all pass			

Table A: (1) This North chose to open 1♦, I prefer 1♣ when equal length in the minors.
(2) What did you respond with this South Hand B in this week's quiz? The only real way to bid hands like this is to play inverted minors (when 2♦ is strong and forcing and 3♦ is the weak raise). Anyway, inverted minors are perhaps rather an advanced convention and with traditional methods you are fixed (both 2♦ and 3♦ are non-forcing). You could simply go for 3NT but you may well miss a slam if partner has a good hand. The best bid with simple Standard American is 2♣. Lie in a minor in order to make a forcing bid.
(3) But now North has a slight rebid problem caused by his choice of opening bid (compare this with Table B). What did you rebid with this North Hand E in this week's quiz? He wants to mention his good ♠ suit but unfortunately that is a reverse – promising 16-17 points. The best bid now is 3♣.
(4) Of course South is slamming opposite a '16-17 count' and so checks on aces.
(5) 6♦ is a better bid if you play that a 1♦ opening promises 4+ ♦'s, then it's a known 4-4 or better fit. I guess that at pairs scoring 6NT is OK and this pair play better minor so it may have been just 3♦'s.

Table B: (1) This North opened 1♣. Good show (well, it was me).
(6) And now South does not have to fabricate a two level bid.
(7) And North now has an automatic descriptive rebid. Simple, eh?
(8) And now we come onto the whole point of me writing up this hand. What did you bid with Hand B(b) in this week's quiz? It's a totally flat 17 count (so deduct a point) with no known fit. I like my partner's 3NT bid – slam will not usually be there.

And what happened? 3NT made with two overtricks. 6NT went two off (South should make 11 tricks but mis-played it – I guess he was still huffing about his partner's 'reverse?'). 6♦ should make (you do not need the ♣ finesse), but only because of the favourable ♦ position. 3NT is the 'best' contract.

The bottom lines: - Top of next page!

The bottom lines: -

- When equal length in the minors open 1♣.
- I like to know that partner's 1♦ opening is always 4+ cards, so I prefer the prepared ♣.
- Learn Inverted Minors. If you do not play inverted minors then you will have to fabricate a minor suit bid when you have strong support for opener's minor and no 4 card major.
- You need a good 16-17 points for a reverse.
- Some players do agree that a reverse after a two level response does not show extra values (I like this treatment, especially if playing 2/1) but it is not standard.
- Devalue 4333 type hands.
- Devalue a hand with no known fit.

Lead a Trump

Board 11 from Monday 6th

Dealer: ♠ AKQ52
 South ♥ KJ32
 Love all ♦ 5
 ♣ KQ10

Table A:

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
pass	1♠	pass	pass
pass (1)			

♠ - N ♠ 1098763
 ♥ A1076 W E ♥ Q
 ♦ A832 S ♦ KQ10
 ♣ 97643 ♣ A82

♠ J4
 ♥ 9854
 ♦ J9764
 ♣ J5

Table B:

West	North	East (J)	South
-	-	-	pass
pass	1♠	pass	pass
dbl (1)	pass	pass (2)	pass

Table A: This West chose to pass at (1), I would double.

Table B: This West doubled at (1), as did the West's at two other tables.

But what should East bid? With 6 'solid' trumps pass is surely best

..... but only if you are going to defend correctly. What did you lead with this East Hand J in this week's quiz? The ♥Q lead is very poor, and a ♣ or ♦ nearly as bad. You must lead a trump, and continue with trumps every time you get the lead – you do not want dummy scoring a ruff and you do not want declarer to score his small trumps. Take advantage of the fact that the trumps are solid from the ten down. With best defence E-W should score 2 ♠'s, 1 ♥, 3 ♦'s and 1 ♣ - so one down.

And what happened? The bidding was as Table B at three tables on Monday and all three declarers were allowed to make the contract. And I note that one North ended up in 3♠ (undoubled) and made an overtrick!

The bottom line.

With solid trumps – lead them.

Bid game with 12 trumps?

Board 19 from Wednesday 8th

Dealer: ♠ AKQ2
South ♥ KQ876
E-W vul ♦ 4
 ♣ J94

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

♠ J73	N	♠ 1098
♥ A92	W E	♥ J5
♦ AJ9832	S	♦ KQ10765
♣ 3		♣ A8
	♠ 654	
	♥ 1043	
	♦ -	
	♣ KQ106542	

- (1) Some people say that you should not pre-empt with an outside 3 card major. Some people say that you should not pre-empt with a void. Of course even more people would say that you should not pre-empt with two 3 card majors and a void! The reasoning is that there may be a better fit with partner and you may miss game. Anyway, just as many people will pre-empt with a decent 7 card suit regardless; a matter of style.
- (2) Borderline for a 3 level overcall, but just about acceptable in my view.
- (3) Now this is why some people do not like partner pre-empting with a side 3 card major (and a void). Obviously North wants to bid, but should he bid 3♥ or 4♣? Eventually North decided upon 4♣; who knows, maybe the opponents will then bid game and there will be a juicy double? Upon reflection I think that my choice of 4♣ was poor and that 3♥ is a better bid. But 4♣ worked out well
- (4) ... so what did you bid with this East Hand (C) in this week's quiz? You have 11 or 12 trumps, so bid 5♦? I don't like it. Partner (West) probably has no 4 card major, you know that N-S probably have a major suit fit somewhere and that they will make game (which they have now failed to bid). This hand has 7 losers and it is unlikely that partner can cover 5 of them when he has simply overcalled. East should be happy that N-S have subsided in 4♣.
- (5) Of course North had no problem in applying the axe.

And what happened? At the other two tables N-S bid 4♥ making +1(450). 5♦ doubled was two down for 500 away and thus a bottom. Obviously defending 4♣ would have been a cold top for E-W.

The bottom lines: -

- Two down doubled vulnerable scores poorly against a non-vul game.
- There's no need to sacrifice if the opponents are not going to bid game!
- You generally need about 25 points for game (3NT, 4♥, 4♠) but 5♣ or 5♦ need more, usually about 29.

Cheating?

Board 17 from Friday 10th

Dealer: ♠ KQ108
North ♥ KJ8
Love all ♦ Q975
♣ 64

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

♠ J	N	♠ 9742
♥ A53	W E	♥ Q104
♦ AJ8	S	♦ 1043
♣ KJ8752		♣ 1093
	♠ A653	
	♥ 9762	
	♦ K62	
	♣ AQ	

- (1) This pair play Acol and so can open a 4 card major. With this North hand I would not open (it does not conform with the rule of 20) but if I did open it would be a weak 1NT (you have no rebid if you open 1♠).
- (2) Most players play this as weakish with usually 5 card support. This pair, however, have agreed to play it as a sound raise, 13-15 with 4 card support.
- (3) After a very long pause. Quite why a long pause was necessary is not clear to me (unless he wants to convey the message to partner that he has a good hand?). To even think about a double or venturing out at the 5 level with an unlimited opener on you left and 13+ on your right is surely maniacal? However, I don't believe that this individual bothered to ask about the 4♠ bid and so assumed it was weak?
- (4) This player then started fumbling around in his bidding box. The N-S pair had had enough and so called me over

....apparently East wanted to double and the opponents said that he was not allowed to bid, who's right? Well actually N-S are not strictly correct, East is allowed to bid after partner's hesitation, but only if he has a clear-cut bid. Clear-cut? What a joke! My opinion is that nobody but an idiot (or a cheat) would possibly think of bidding at (4) – let me know what you think. And what do you think of West's long (it was described to me as two minutes) hesitation followed by pass? Now for East to even think about bidding at (4) with this totally flat garbage is obviously taking partner's hesitation into account and is thus cheating according to the rules (and me). Incidentally, this East was warned just last week for repeated psyching (not allowed in this club). Since two separate players (not a partnership) asked me this Friday if I can do something to curtail the antics of this pair this is *the last warning*.

And what happened? 4♠ went one down for an average.

The bottom lines: -

- When partner make a long pause and then passes this gives you 'unauthorised' information. You are not allowed to let the fact that you know that partner had something to think about affect you bid. You are not barred from bidding, but any bid that you make must be clear-cut.
- Take my warnings seriously; players have been ejected in the past and doubtless will be in the future.

A Sign-offBoard 18 from Friday 10th

Dealer:	♠ 8764				
East	♥ AQ9		West(H)	North	East(F) South
N-S vul	♦ 10864		-	-	1♣ (1) pass
	♣ J5		1♥	pass	1NT pass
			2♣ (2)	pass	3♣ (3) pass
			3NT	all pass	
♠ Q103	N	♠ AK5			
♥ K1073	W E	♥ 65			
♦ K5	S	♦ QJ92			
♣ Q632		♣ A1098			
	♠ J92				
	♥ J842				
	♦ A73				
	♣ K74				

- (1) So what did you open with this East Hand F(a) in this week's quiz? With equal length in the minors 1♣ is best, but I would not argue if you chose 1NT. This hand has average shape with good top cards, the only quacks are working together (touching honours are good) and that ♣1098 is surely worth at least a point when in a 4 card suit. Anyway, I guess that most chose 1♣ and I won't argue.
- (2) And what did you bid with this West Hand H at (2) in this week's quiz? It's close to a 2NT bid but passing 1NT is probably best at pairs. The 2♣ bid chosen at this table is also reasonable as there is a known 4-4 (maybe better) fit; but I prefer pass as this hand is near to an invite and so overtrick(s) are a real possibility and 1NT+1 scores better than 2♣+1.
- (3) And what did you bid with this East Hand F(b) at (3) in this week's quiz? Partner's 2♣ bid should mean that he does not like NT and wants to play in 2♣. You have said your hand (12-14) and partner is the captain. His 2♣ bid is not an invitation and you should pass. If you feel you should press on then you should have opened 1NT!

And what happened? Most pairs were in 1NT. 3NT was is a dicey contract but made on a mis-defence. Actually, 9 tricks were made at most tables, perhaps I need to write something about defending? I saw one North discard a good ♠ and also an important ♦!

The bottom line.

- When you have limited your hand and partner gives simple preference to your first suit, then that's where he is saying that he wants to play. He's the captain and in charge.
- Don't suggest playing in 2 of a minor when 1NT is likely to make an overtrick. 120 (1NT+1) is more than 110 (2♣+1).

Our 1NT opening is overcalled

Board 11 from Friday 10th

Dealer: ♠ K6
South ♥ AQ74
Love all ♦ QJ764
♣ A4

West	North	East	South(G)
-	-	-	pass
pass	1NT (1)	2♣	dbl (2)
pass	pass (3)	pass	

♠ AJ93	N	♠ 74
♥ 963	W E	♥ 102
♦ 3	S	♦ AK85
♣ KJ932		♣ Q10865
	♠ Q10852	
	♥ KJ85	
	♦ 1092	
	♣ 7	

- (1) So would you open 1NT with this North hand? Not everybody is happy with opening 1NT with 2 doubletons but I think it's fine with a 5 card minor if both doubletons have an honour (A, K or Q). If you open 1♦ then you have a rebid problem (it's not quite good/shapely enough for a reverse into 2♥ in my style – although I suspect that many would disagree with me?). Anyway, I think that the 1NT opening chosen here is fine.
- (2) What did you bid with this South Hand G at (2) in this week's quiz? South meant this double as Stayman....
- (3) and North thought that it was penalties.

What happened? East made 2♣+1 with 4♥ making for N-S at other tables. South maintained that his double was take-out and North thought that it was penalties. I was asked to adjudicate. So what is the solution?

First of all, it is standard that any double in this situation is penalties and without agreement to the contrary that is the case. It is possible to improve upon this, but you have to agree it. After partner's 1NT opening has been overcalled one common agreement is: -

After 1NT - 2♣ - double is Stayman
2♦ is a transfer to ♥'s
2♥ is a transfer to ♠'s etc. i.e. systems on and ignore the overcall.

After 1NT - 2♦ - double is a transfer to ♥'s
2♥ is a transfer to ♠'s
3♦ is Stayman (and more experienced players play Lebensohl).

After 1NT - 2♥/♠ - Systems off. A double is penalties. A cue bid of 3 of their major is Stayman (and more experienced players play Lebensohl).

Of course it gets a bit more complicated if the overcall was conventional but that's best left to experienced partnerships. And if you play this scheme you may find (at other clubs) unscrupulous opponents who will overcall on garbage in the knowledge that they cannot be doubled for penalties?

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: 1♠. With a 5 or 6 card major prefer to overcall rather than double.
2♥ (Michaels) is a poor bid because it is generally 5-5 shape and weaker than this hand.
- Hand B: (a) 2♣. Strong hands with support for partner's minor are tricky. You have to find a forcing bid and if you do not play inverted minors (when 2♦ is forcing) then you have to bid 2♣.
(b) 3NT. Partner generally has around 12-14 points for his bids. You have no known fit and the 4333 shape means it's worth a point less so only worth 16 pts. It's probably a combined 28-30, not enough to look for slam. You could bid 2♥ (4th suit forcing) but I don't really see the point.
- Hand C: Pass. The opponents have probably missed a major suit game, let them play in 4♣. A 4♦ bid only gives them another shot and a 5♦ bid is pointless – it's unlikely to make and is an unnecessary 'sacrifice' when the opponents have missed bidding game.
- Hand D: 4♠ (or 2♦). Partner has promised support for all 3 unbid suits (or else a very strong hand) and you have game-going values and a 5 card suit, so bid game. 2♠ shows about 11-12 points and is non-forcing. 3♠ is a possibility, but it really is best played as semi-pre-emptive. A good alternative (and what you should do with a game forcing hand with just 4♠'s) is to cue bid 2♦ (game forcing) and then bid ♠'s.
- Hand E: 3♣. 2♠ would be a game forcing reverse promising around 16-17 points. There is no need to bid the ♠ suit here as partner has denied them. If partner actually has 4♠'s then he must have a big hand and he will reverse into his ♠ suit next go.
- Hand F: (a) 1♣ (or 1NT). It's best to open 1♣ when equal length in the minors. This hand, however, has that 1098 in ♣'s and I think that it may just be worth a 1NT opener.
(b) Pass. Partner has stated that he prefers to play in 2♣ rather than 1NT. This 2♣ bid is a sign off and partner is certainly not inviting you to bid again..
- Hand G: This one is difficult. With traditional methods double is penalties and so you have to choose between 2♠ or a game forcing 3♣ Stayman. There is, however, a better solution and I have described it on page 9.
- Hand H: Pass. The hand is borderline for 2NT but I would only think about that at teams scoring. Go for the safe + at pairs. 2♣ is a sensible alternative (there is a 4-4 or better ♣ fit) but as this hand is maximum it's quite likely that there will be overtrick(s) and being in NT is important at pairs scoring.
- Hand J: Lead a top trump. And continue to lead trumps every time you gain the lead – you do not want dummy scoring any ruffs and you do not want declarer to score his wee trumps. What's more, you don't want to have to ruff yourself because you will score your long trump eventually – so the ♥Q lead is very poor. If you ruff ♥'s twice then declarer will be in control and will score his 5th little trump.



	N-S winners		E-W winners	
Monday 13/12/04	1 st Bob/Dave	60 %	1 st John/Willy	61 %
	2 nd = Beryl/Margit	54 %	2 nd Alex/Jeff	56 %
	2 nd = Hans(AU)/Norman	54 %		
Wednesday 15/12/04	1 st Chuck/Lewis	60 %	2 nd Norman/Kees	57 %
Friday 17/12/04	1 st Norman/Ian	60 %	2 nd Bob/Dave	58 %

Norman deserves a mention; he's just back and finished in the top two at all three clubs with three different partners. And didn't John/Willy do well, they play just once a week.

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

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A partner opens 1♠ and RHO doubles, what do you bid?
♠ 942	♠ J	
♥ K54	♥ AQ987643	
♦ K653	♦ Q6	With Hand B it's favourable vulnerability, what do you open?
♣ KJ6	♣ Q3	
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C LHO opens 1NT and partner passes. What do you do if ... (a) RHO bids 2♣ Stayman? (b) RHO bids 2♦, a transfer?
♠ AK87	♠ AQJ86	
♥ A87	♥ AKQ74	
♦ 7	♦ A6	What do you open with Hand D?
♣ KJ842	♣ 2	
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E LHO opens 1♠, partner doubles and RHO bids 3♠. What do you bid?
♠ KQJ75	♠ K854	
♥ 107	♥ Q983	With Hand F partner opens 1♥ and RHO doubles, what do you bid?
♦ J72	♦ A7	
♣ 1084	♣ A84	
Hand G	Hand H	With Hand G partner opens 1♠ and RHO overcalls 2♥. You play negative doubles, so what do you do?
♠ J8	♠ AQJ108752	
♥ A10543	♥ 765	
♦ AQ95	♦ -	With Hand H partner opens 1NT, what do you do?
♣ 108	♣ 3	
Hand J	Hand K	With Hand J partner opens 1♣, what do you do?
♠ 10953	♠ A842	
♥ 976	♥ J3	With Hand K LHO opens 1♣ and this is passed round to you, what do you do?
♦ A8653	♦ K102	
♣ 7	♣ A982	

You cannot double (for penalties)

Board 13 from Monday 13th

Dealer: ♠ KQJ75
North ♥ 107
Both vul ♦ J72
♣ 1084

Table A

West (A)	North	East	South
-	pass	1♠	dbl
pass (1)	pass (2)	pass	

♠ 942 N ♠ A10863
♥ K54 W E ♥ J962
♦ K653 S ♦ A8
♣ KJ6 ♣ A3

♠ -
♥ AQ83
♦ Q1094
♣ Q9752

Table B

West	North(E)	East	South
-	pass	1♠	dbl
3♠ (1)	pass (3)	pass	pass

Table A: (1) So what did you bid with this West Hand A in this week's quiz? I think that pass is feeble – you cannot pass with 9 points (deduct one for the flat shape). Redouble (9+ points) is reasonable, but I would prefer to have less ♠'s for that bid. I would bid 1NT but 2♠ is also acceptable.

(2) Passing 1♠ doubled here is risky and 1NT is a sound alternative.

Table B: (1) As I said, I like either 1NT or 2♠ here. There are a number major faults with this 3♠ bid. Does South's double affect your bid? More experienced players play the Jordan convention here, whereby 3♠ is simply pre-emptive and a sound raise to 3♠ or better is shown by bidding 2NT (you do not need a natural 2NT bid as with a balanced 11-12 you would redouble) but this hand is unsuitable in any case as it contains only 3 trumps. Anyway, this E-W pair obviously did not play that and so bid ignoring the double. If there was no double then 3♠ is wrong for two reasons. First, it should promise 4 card support (else bid a minor first) and secondly this hand is simply not worth an invitational raise (totally flat, only 3 trumps and no ♠ honour). 1NT or 2♠ are correct.

(3) And what did you bid with the North Hand E in this week's quiz? You would presumably like to double for penalties but you cannot – double would be for take-out and you know that partner, with his ♠ void, will almost certainly bid. There is no option but to pass and collect the undoubled penalty. On a good day East may bid 4♠ which you can double for penalties or partner may double 3♠ (again for take-out) and you can pass this.

And what happened? 1♠ doubled made for a E-W top. 3♠ was down two and the 200 for N-S was a near top.

The bottom lines.

- You need very good trumps to pass partner's one level take-out double. ♠KQJxx may not be good enough.
- If partner makes a take-out double and RHO raises, then a double by you is generally again for take-out.
- Deduct a point for the totally flat 4333 type shape.

I mentioned it in the last deal, so here it is in action – at least by one player of the pair.

Dealer:	♠ K854	<u>Table A</u>				
South	♥ Q983	West	North (F)	East	South	
Both vul	♦ A7	-	-	-	1♥	
	♣ A84	dbl (1)	2NT (2)	pass	pass (3)	
		pass				
♠ Q106	N	♠ 973				
♥ A2	W E	♥ J4	<u>Table B</u>			
♦ Q1053	S	♦ J984	West	North (F)	East	South
♣ KJ95		♣ 10762	-	-	-	1♥
	♠ AJ2		dbl (1)	redbl (4)	pass (5)	pass
	♥ K10765		1NT (6)	dbl (7)	pass (8)	pass
	♦ K62		pass (9)			
	♣ Q3					

Table A: (1) I like to have 4 ♠'s for a double of 1♥ but this double is acceptable.
 (2) What did you bid with this North Hand F in this week's quiz? After a double a redouble promises 9+ points and is generally looking to double the opponents somewhere since you have the balance of the power, However, when you have a fit for partner there is less chance of a juicy penalty and it's best to support. Most experienced players play that a raise to 2♥, 3♥ or even 4♥ here are weak pre-emptive bids. So what do you do with a sound raise to 3♥ or 4♥? The answer is that a natural bid of 2NT (normally a flat 11-12) is no longer needed as with that hand type you would redouble. So 2NT is a conventional bid, proclaiming a sound raise in ♥'s and in this instance North would bid 4♥ next turn.
 (3) Of course the Jordan 2NT is forcing and with this minimum South should bid 3♥ (which this North would have raised to 4♥). This South has agreed to play the Jordan 2NT convention in future.

Table B: (4) This pair presumably do not play Jordan 2NT and so North redoubled.
 (5) With no 5 card suit East correctly passed.
 (6) I believe that East criticised this bid. I think that it's fine as long as you agree that it conveys the message 'pick a minor'.
 (7) This North hand is not suitable to double a minor, that's why I would not have bid redouble at (4), but it is happy to double 1NT
 (8) East could pick a minor here but pass is OK as partner gets another shot.
 (9) But West cannot pass here. He either has to bid a minor or redouble to insist that partner bids one. You can be sure that 1NT doubled will be a disaster.

And what happened? 2NT by North made 11 tricks but scored a clear N-S bottom. 1NT by West went 4 down for the E-W bottom. All the other tables were in a simple 4♥ by N-S making.

The Bottom lines: -

- A redouble is 9+ points but generally with no fit for partner.
- Support with support rather than redouble. Bid Jordan 2NT with support and 11+ points.
- If your side is on the receiving end of the doubles, do not play in NT, play in a 4-4 fit.
- In many situations, a redouble by a NT bidder is SOS.

Bid their suit to ask for a stop

Board 14 from Monday 13th

Dealer: ♠ 4
East ♥ K74
Love all ♦ K10
♣ AQJ9862

♠ K973	N	♠ AQ85
♥ A53	W E	♥ J1062
♦ 953	S	♦ J876
♣ 743		♣ 10
	♠ J1062	
	♥ Q98	
	♦ AQ42	
	♣ K5	

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

- (1) A rather light double; but with both majors, acceptable when non-vul.
- (2) With a minimum hand pass is better than 1NT.
- (3) What would you bid here? Obviously you (well at least I) want to be in 3NT if, and only if, partner has a ♠ stop; and the way to find out is to cue bid their suit.
- (4) With a stop, South bids 3NT. With no stop he would bid something else and North would then settle for 5♣.

And what happened? 3NT is clearly the best spot. It was bid at most tables and made anything from 9 to 12 tricks. There were of course the odd couple of pairs who do not believe what I say about 3NT usually being better than being in a minor. 5♦ somehow went minus 3 for the deserved bottom and 3♣ scored two overtricks for the 2nd bottom.

The bottom line. If you need a stop from partner in the enemy's suit to be in 3NT, then cue bid their suit.

A 4 level opener Board 18 from Monday 13th

Dealer: ♠ 52
 East ♥ K2
 N-S vul ♦ A109854
 ♣ K76

Table A
 West North East(B) South
 - - 3♥ (1) 3♠ (2)
 all pass

♠ Q10986 N ♠ J
 ♥ J105 W E ♥ AQ987643
 ♦ K2 S ♦ Q6
 ♣ J108 ♣ Q3
 ♠ AK743
 ♥ -
 ♦ J73
 ♣ A9542

Table B
 West North East(B) South
 - - 4♥ (1) 4♠ (3)
 all pass

Table A: (1) What did you open with Hand B in this week's quiz? Generally speaking, with six it's two, with seven it's three and with eight (a major) it's four. 4♥ is the best opening with this hand, especially non-vul.

(2) Surely 3♠ is the best bet.

Table B: (1) This East chose 4♥.

(3) And that makes it difficult for South.

And what happened? 4♠ went minus 3 but scored only just below average as it was doubled at other tables.

The bottom line. With an 8 card major and a weakish hand, open at the 4 level. With a stronger hand play Namyats (open 4♣/♦ - news-sheet 106).

Don't double with no surpriseBoard 15 from Monday 13th

Dealer: ♠ 3
 South ♥ Q9542
 N-S vul ♦ AQJ65
 ♣ 95

♠ 10652 N ♠ AK87
 ♥ 1063 W E ♥ A87
 ♦ 9432 S ♦ 7
 ♣ 107 ♣ KJ842

♠ QJ94
 ♥ KJ
 ♦ K108
 ♣ AQ63

Table A

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

Table B

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

Table C

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

Table A: (1) So what did you bid with this East Hand C(b) in this week's quiz? You know that LHO is 15-17 but don't yet know about RHO's strength. As 2♦ is forcing I think that a prudent pass is best and wait to see if North has points – you can always bid next go if North is weak.

(2) A 2nd suit and game forcing.

Table B: (1) This East chose to overcall his 5 card suit, I guess it's not too bad at this vulnerability?
 (3) Obviously this worked out OK but I would never dream of bidding here, partner has not promised any points with his transfer. I would pass and then the auction would be much the same as Table A.

Table C: (1) Apparently East meant this double as take-out. That is not standard and makes no sense to me. The standard meaning of a double of a cipher bid is that it shows that suit and you want it led if partner is on opening lead.

(4) I would pass here. I play that to complete the transfer after a double promises three of the suit (pass with two and super-accept with four).

(5) 2nd suit, game forcing.

(6) I've been through this before. N-S have freely bid to game and East has nothing more than three top tricks. With no surprise, double is a poor bid.

(7) North has shown his hand nicely, partner obviously has the black suits and there is no reason to believe that 3NT should not make easily, teach 'em a lesson.

And what happened? A ♠ was led at Table C (presumably West also played that the double did not show ♦'s?). Anyway, East had no more than his 3 top tricks and so that was 1400 to N-S. Most other pairs were in 3NT undoubled.

The bottom line. Don't double a freely bid game without a surprise.

Is a reverse forcing?Board 16 from Monday 13th

Dealer: ♠ Q3
 West ♥ 9653
 E-W vul ♦ Q863

West	North(me)	East	South
1♣	pass	1♠	pass (2)

	♣ J87		2♦ (3)	pass	pass (4)	dbl (5)
			pass	2♥ (6)	3♦ (7)	all pass
♠ J7	N	♠ K9842				
♥ A2	W E	♥ 1074				
♦ AK95	S	♦ J1072				
♣ KQ643		♣ 2				
	♠ A1065					
	♥ KQJ8					
	♦ 4					
	♣ A1095					

Now one nameless absent individual has accused me of always being negative in the news-sheets. Hans (Austria) and myself were pitted against the Australians here and I like the bidding all round, let's have a look: -

- (1) Would you respond with this East Hand? You know me, I would never pass 1♣ with a singleton and a hand like this – and it appears that our Australian pair (Gerard/Derek) have the same philosophy (they were E-W here).
- (2) This is a nice hand but there is no good bid as the opponents have bid two of your suits.
- (3) A reverse, so about 16 + points.
- (4) It looks like I am not the only person who believes that a reverse need not be forcing. 2♦ is surely a better spot than passing out 1♣! My personal opinion is that it's OK to pass a reverse if you have responded on sub-minimal values, and this is especially true if you play strong (or Benjamin) twos (when opener will not have a rock-crusher).
- (5) There's only 1 suit left so South could simply bid 2♥, but it may just be that partner can pass for penalties...
- (6) ... but this North hand is not good enough to pass and with 4♥'s a 2♥ bid is clear.
- (7) And this is a reasonable bid. East has shown his sub-minimum and so it's safe(ish) to retreat into the known 4-4♦ fit, it's probably a better bid if non-vul.

And what happened? 3♦ went two down for an about average score all round.

The bottom lines: -

- It's up to you if you play a reverse after a one level response as forcing or not. In Standard American it is forcing but it makes a lot of sense to me if it is not. That enables one to respond on sub-minimal values. In this example 1♣ passed out would be a poor result for E-W.

A Warning

And just one further point, you may recall in news-sheet 110 that Jeff psyched a 2♦ bid in this same sequence, 1♣ - 1♠ - 2♦ - pass, and then tried to blame partner for his pass, stating that 2♦ is forcing. Obviously not everybody plays a reverse as forcing and Jeff got the bottom he deserved - plus a warning that he will receive a suspension from the club if he psyches yet again.

5-5, bid the higher ranking

Board 12 from Wednesday 15th

A couple of people have tried to mis-quote me recently, let's make it very clear. With touching 4 card suits, bid the lower ranking; with touching 5 card suits, bid the higher ranking first. Let's see what can happen if you ignore this advice: -

Dealer: ♠ 1052
West ♥ J1063
N-S vul ♦ Q103
♣ A109

♠ AQJ86	N	♠ K74
♥ AKQ74	W E	♥ 8
♦ A6	S	♦ K7542
♣ 2		♣ Q874

♠ 93
♥ 952
♦ J98
♣ KJ653

Table A

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

Table B

West	North	East	South
1♥ (1)	pass	1NT	pass
3♠ (6)	pass	3NT (7)	pass
pass (8)	pass		

Table A: (1) What did you open with this West Hand D in this week's quiz? I would not argue if you chose 2♣. If you decide to open a suit, then it's 1♠ - the higher ranking of 5-5's.
(2) It's not quite strong enough for a 4♥ splinter and with just 3 trumps I prefer to bid a minor before supporting ♠'s.
(3) Natural and game forcing.
(4) A singleton is not usually good in partner's 2nd suit and so East settled for game.
(5) West could press on here and I believe that he did at two other tables.

Table B: (1) This is the wrong opening bid as partner will always assume that you have more ♥'s than ♠'s.
(6) And here you see the problem. Some players play that a reverse after a 1NT response is not strictly forcing and since West was not sure he made a forcing 3♠ bid.
(7) But now the level is uncomfortably high and West has only promised 4 ♠'s and so East chose the NT game.
(8) And West has fixed himself. He cannot bid 4♥ now as that would promise 4-6 shape. Compare this with a possible auction 1♠ - 1NT - 3♥ - 3NT - 4♥. Here West shows 5-5, that is why you bid 5-5 from the top down.

And what happened? 3NT was bid at two tables and went one down for a joint bottom. 6♠ is obviously cold (lead a low ♥ to the 2nd round of ♥'s before pulling trumps and ruff in dummy). 6♠ was bid twice, one made it and one went one down. The last table was 4♠ just making. Funny game bridge, this last pair made 2 less tricks than are on offer but still got an above average score.

The bottom line. Bid 5-5 from the top and 4-4 from the bottom.

Pass 1♣?

Board 7 from Friday 17th

Dealer: ♠ KJ6
South ♥ KQ52
Both vul ♦ J4
♣ KJ54

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

♠ A842	N	♠ Q7
♥ J3	W E	♥ A1084
♦ K102	S	♦ Q97
♣ A982		♣ Q1063
	♠ 10953	
	♥ 976	
	♦ A8653	
	♣ 7	

- (1) Many would open this hand. It conforms with the rule of 20 and a 1♣ opening leaves an easy 1♠ rebid.
- (2) Did you pass with this South Hand J in this week's quiz? You know me, I will not pass a possible 3 card 1♣ opening if there is a reasonable alternative. I would bid 1♦ and pass any rebid from partner.
- (3) And what did you bid with this West Hand K in this week's quiz? I would pass, partner (East) could not find a bid over 1♣ and so is probably flattish and this West hand has 4 trumps. More often than not a bid in this situation allows declarer to find a better spot.
- (4) And so he did.

And what happened? The Moysian ♥ fit played very well and N-S made 1♥ +1 for a clear top, obviously 1♣ by North would have been a very poor contract. At another table E-W made 2♥ (!), I guess you have to play well if you bid that poorly? Other tables were in 1NT by various players.

The bottom lines: -

- Do not pass partner's 1♣ opening with shortage if you can 'dig up' a bid.
- Be wary of balancing over 1♣ if you have 4♣'s.
- Moysian fits play well when you can ruff in the 3 trump hand.

Play quiz

♠ AQJ108752	N	♠ K9
♥ 765	W E	♥ AJ93
♦ -	S	♦ A76
♣ 3		♣ QJ109

You are East and end up in 6♠ after some somewhat optimistic bidding by partner. Luckily you get a ♦ lead and can discard the ♣3. How do you continue? Answer overleaf.

This deal was brought to my attention, with one player saying how well they bid and how partner made it; let's see: -

Dealer:	♠ 63	<u>Table A</u>				
East	♥ KQ102	West(H)	North	East	South	
Love all	♦ KQ52	-	-	1NT	pass	
	♣ AK8	4♣ (1)	pass (2)	4♠ (3)	pass	
		6♠ (4)	all pass			
♠ AQJ108752	N	♠ K9				
♥ 765	W E	♥ AJ93				
♦ -	S	♦ A76	<u>Table B</u>			
♣ 3		♣ QJ109	West	North	East	South
	♠ -		-	-	1NT	pass
	♥ 84		4♠ (1)	all pass		
	♦ J109843					
	♣ 76542					

Table A: (1) Gerber (ace-ask). So what did you bid with this West Hand H in this week's quiz? The direct bid of 4♣ over 1NT is rarely a good bid, and this is no exception; I would go as far as to say it is a very poor bid for a number of reasons.

To start with, should this West hand be looking for slam? Doubtful – but let's assume that you think it should, then how should you proceed? If you bid 4♣ asking for aces and you get, say, a response of two, does that include the 'useless' ♦ A or not?

This North asked for aces and explained to me later that his partner's two ace response meant that it was 66% that partner had the correct aces. Wrong, of course, it's 33%. But is there a better way to bid this West hand?

Yes. There are a couple of options.

First of all, if looking for slam then transfer. At least then a subsequent ace-ask would include the ♠ K (RKCB). But actually there are better approaches. A transfer followed by 4♦ is played as a splinter by many – a reasonable approach. Even better is a transfer followed by 5♦ – showing a void. And, what's more, many pairs even have an improvement on this – 5♦ shows a void and is Exclusion RKCB – asking for keycards outside the ♦ suit – clearly a vast improvement on the direct 4♣ bid as the ♠ K is included and the ♦ suit excluded.

(2) And yet another reason why 4♣ should be bad – North should double this for a lead.

(3) Anyway, in this auction East showed any two aces and (4) West punted slam.

Table B: This auction is probably more sensible, although there was an unsubstantiated rumour that West bid 4♠ believing that he was opening the bidding, having not seen partner's 1NT opening.

Actually, assuming that West did notice that East had opened, there are better ways to reach the same 4♠ contract. You can transfer and then bid 4♠ or else play Texas Transfers (or even South African Texas) whereby you transfer to 4♠ immediately. I would choose one of these options and not look for slam.

Anyway, the play in 6♠ was also brought to my attention, let's have a look: -

So then, you are in 6♠, how does the play go? Obviously it is a very poor contract but luckily for you East is declarer (a transfer would have ensured that but the fortunate two-ace reply also achieved the same result!). So with South on lead you get a stroke of luck with a ♦ lead because North did not double ♣'s. You toss dummy's losing ♣ on the ♦ A but how do get rid of one of a losing ♥? What this East did was ruff a ♣, return to hand with the ♠ 9, ruff a ♣, return to hand with the ♠ K, ruff a 3rd ♣ (the ♣A and ♣K have now fallen and trumps have been drawn), return to hand with the ♥ A and toss a losing ♥ on the now established ♣Q.

Well played? His partner thought so and it worked – I was not so impressed. Did you come up with a superior line in the play quiz?

Play Quiz Answer

Playing for the ♣AK to drop in three rounds with 8 out is well below the odds. A 5-3 split is 47% and the odds of the AK being in the hand with 3 cards (or AK doubleton) are about 20%; the total chance of success for this line is about 10%. The correct line is to play the ♣Q at trick two and if not covered then toss a ♥. You regain the lead in hand and should then lead the ♣J and again toss a ♥ if not covered. This is a (double) ruffing finesse and will succeed 75% of the time – whenever South holds either the ♣A or ♣K or both. Unfortunately this was one of the 25% cases where ‘my’ 75% line would fail and the 10% line succeeds. So much for mathematics.

Of course it’s a very poor slam anyway with an ‘unavoidable’ ♥ loser on a ♣ lead. Even a trump lead ruins the entries.

And what happened elsewhere? 6♠ was also bid at another table, quite how it was made when West was declarer is a mystery; presumably North tried the ♣K after cashing the ♣A? – obviously a silly try as West would not bid slam with two losing ♣’s, would he? Note that in a situation like this when partner leads the A of a suit and the Q is on table, it is best for South to give count rather than attitude (which is meaningless in this slam contract). Some players lead ace for attitude and king for count, so North would have led the king to ask for count in the ♣ suit.

At another table North could not resist doubling 4♠ and so got a poor score when it made +1. Other tables were in 4♠ making either +1 or +2.

The bottom lines – top of next page.

The bottom lines: -

- With a long major opposite a 1NT opening, transfer.
- 4♣ (Gerber) directly over partner's 1NT opening is usually a very poor bid. More often than not it's better to transfer or bid Stayman or another forcing bid.
- With a long major and a hand with no slam ambitions opposite partner's 1NT opening you can transfer to 4♥ or 4♠ directly (Texas Transfers or South African Texas).
- Indeed, a direct 4♣ (Gerber) is rarely a good bid, and so this is scrapped when using South African Texas - 4♣ is a transfer to 4♥ and 4♦ is a transfer to 4♠.
- When a trump suit has been agreed or implied, many top players use a jump to five of an unbid suit as exclusion (Roman Keycard) Blackwood; whereby the ace of the exclusion suit is ignored in any reply.
- In situations where you obviously cannot give positive attitude, then give count.
- Play with the odds, a ruffing finesse is 50%, a double ruffing finesse is 75%.
- Do not bid Blackwood/Gerber with a void.
- Do not bid Blackwood/Gerber with a weak doubleton/triplet.
- Do not bid Blackwood/Gerber with both of the above!
- Do not tell me about it if you have!!

Don't pre-empt and then bid again

Board 8 from Friday 17th

How many times do I say the same thing over and over again in the news-sheets? And the culprit here most certainly reads them – shame it's in one ear (eye) and out the other.

Dealer: ♠ AKQ985

West ♥ AK953

Love all ♦ 9

♣ 8

West	North	East	South
------	-------	------	-------

4♦ (1)	4♠ (2)	pass	pass
--------	--------	------	------

5♦ (3)	5♥ (4)	all pass	
--------	--------	----------	--

♠ 4 N ♠ J652

♥ 4 W E ♥ 1072

♦ AQJ106532 S ♦ 87

♣ A73 ♣ QJ54

♠ 107

♥ QJ86

♦ K4

♣ K10962

- (1) What would you open with this West Hand ? It's a matter of style but 5♦ is probably best. I would not argue with 4♦ (if you don't play Namyats), 1♦ or even a strong 2♦. It's too strong for a 3♦ opening.
- (2) The pre-empt has made it difficult for North. He did not wish to double in case partner passed and so had little choice but 4♠.
- (3) This 5♦ bid is ridiculous, especially with me leaning over your shoulder. If you think it's worth 5♦ (I won't argue) then bid it first go. This 2nd bid after pre-empting allows N-S to find the best contract.
- (4) And that they did.

And what happened? 5♥ made exactly (as would 4♠, so 5♥ scores more). Some West's did not pre-empt and so N-S played in just 4♥ at three tables.

The bottom lines: -

- Pre-empt to the limit first go.
- Do not bid again having pre-empted.

Quickie Quiz

Hand L

- ♠ AQ653 You play negative doubles. Partner and RHO both pass and you open 1♠
- ♥ J8 in third seat. LHO overcalls 2♥ and partner and RHO both pass.
- ♦ J1064 What do you do?
- ♣ A6 Answer overleaf.

How to penalise the opponents when playing negative doubles

Board 13 from Friday 17th

Dealer:	♠ J8	West	North (G)	East	South
North	♥ A10543	-	pass (1)	pass	1 ♠
Both vul	♦ AQ95	2♥ (2)	dbl (3)	pass	3♦ (4)
	♣ 108				

♠ 102	N	♠ K974
♥ KQ972	W E	♥ 6
♦ 32	S	♦ K87
♣ KJ32		♣ Q9754
	♠ AQ653	
	♥ J8	
	♦ J1064	
	♣ A6	

- (1) With the points in two suits, two tens and good intermediates, I would open this North hand with 1♥, especially as there's an easy 2♦ rebid. But it's a marginal opener and passing should have worked out very well.
- (2) This is a bit light for a two level overcall, especially vulnerable. But I guess it's OK if the opponents do not know how to double you for penalties?
- (3) And what did you do with this North Hand G in this week's quiz? If you play negative doubles you have to pass and await partner's re-opening double.
- (4) South obviously bids 3♦ here as partner's 'negative double' promised ♣'s and ♦'s.

And what happened? 3♦ made but did not score as much as 2♥ doubled going five or six down would have!

The bottom lines: -

- If you play negative doubles then pass when you have a penalty double hand
- if you play negative doubles then re-open with a double when partner passes an overcall from LHO.
- You need close to an opening hand to overcall at the two level, especially if vulnerable and if it's only a 5 card suit.

Quickie Quiz Answer

North should pass at (3) above and so the answer to the quickie quiz is that South should then double. When you play negative doubles then opener should always re-open with a double in situations like this in case partner has a penalty hand. The only exceptions are where opener has strength in the overcalled suit (so partner cannot possibly have a penalty hand) or when opener has a wildly distributional hand and cannot stand a double. The fact that partner is a passed hand is totally irrelevant.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: 2♠ or 1NT. I prefer 1NT with all the honours (tenaces) outside ♠'s. Of course the hand is not worth 3♠ (or 2NT) because it is totally flat, has only 3 card support for partner and has no honour in his suit.
- Hand B: 4♥. I would open 4♥ with this hand at any vulnerability.
- Hand C: (a) Double. This shows ♣'s and asks for a ♣ lead in the likely event that you end up defending.
(b) Pass. A double would show ♦'s and any other action is unwise.
- Hand D: 1♠ or 2♣. I think that it's worth 2♣, but only if partner understands that a 2♣ opening followed by a 2♠ bid may be the start of a big two-suiter and does not leap off to 4♠ (fast arrival) with a weak hand with miserable ♠'s (as one Windy City ex-club 'expert' advocates – he partnered Dave recently and that's apparently what he did). If you choose to open one of a suit, then it's 1♠ rather than 1♥ – bid 5-5's from the top down.
- Hand E: Pass. You would presumably like to double for penalties but you cannot as double here would be for take-out and you know that partner has a void.
- Hand F: You have a sound raise to 4♥ and that is the best bid if you play that as a sound raise. However, most players play 4♥ as weak. You could redouble (showing 9+ points) but that generally implies no fit for partner and a desire to defend a doubled contract. Both 3♥ and 4♥ bids are played as weak by most experienced pairs these days as is a new suit at the two level. So what is the answer?
2NT. The Jordan 2NT convention. 2NT is not needed to show a balanced 11-12 points (you would redouble) and so 2NT is conventional, showing a sound raise to 3♥ or more; this then frees the direct 3♥ and 4♥ bids for pre-empts.
- Hand G: Pass. You want to double the opponents for penalties, so pass and await partner's 'automatic' re-opening double. If partner does not re-open with a double most of the time, then do not play negative doubles or find a new partner.
- Hand H: 4♠. Preferably via a Texas (or South African Texas) bid or via a transfer. There may be slam, but partner needs the right cards and you need sophisticated methods to find if he has them.
- Hand J: 1♦. I am not sadistic enough to leave partner playing in 1♣ opposite a singleton.
- Hand K: Pass. Partner has some values but could do nothing over a 1♣ opening and so must be balanced or have ♣'s. You have 4 ♣'s and opener may well not be in his best spot.



Monday 20/12/04	N-S winners		E-W winners	
	1 st Kenneth/David	61 %	1 st Gerard/Derek	61 %
	2 nd Knut/Olav	60 %	2 nd Mike(Can)/Kees	56 %
Wednesday 22/12/04	N-S winners		E-W winners	
	1 st Clive/Terry	62 %	1 st Gerard/Derek	66 %
	2 nd Bjorn/Kees	54 %	2 nd Jeff/Perry	57 %
Friday 24/12/04	1 st Ursula/David	58 %	2 nd Gerard/Derek	56 %

Looks like Ursula/David prevented Gerard/Derek from getting the grand slam trophy.

Bidding Quiz

Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.

Hand A Hand B With Hand A partner opens 1♣ and you bid 1♦. Partner then bids 2♥, what do you do?

- | | |
|---------|---------|
| ♠ K872 | ♠ 9863 |
| ♥ J97 | ♥ K1094 |
| ♦ QJ654 | ♦ 83 |
| ♣ 6 | ♣ Q96 |

With Hand B partner opens 1NT, what do you do?

Hand C Hand D With Hand C RHO opens 1♣, what do you do?

- | | |
|---------|---------|
| ♠ KQ108 | ♠ KJ5 |
| ♥ K5 | ♥ 52 |
| ♦ KJ984 | ♦ QJ4 |
| ♣ 65 | ♣ AKJ42 |

What do you open with Hand D?

With Hand E LHO opens 1♣ and partner bids 1♦, what do you do?

Hand E Hand F (a) What do you open with Hand F?

- | | |
|--------|---------|
| ♠ A542 | ♠ Q |
| ♥ Q762 | ♥ AQ82 |
| ♦ Q3 | ♦ AK3 |
| ♣ Q74 | ♣ A8742 |

Suppose you open 1♣, then what do you rebid if ...

- (b) Partner responds 1♦?
- (c) Partner responds 1♥?
- (d) Partner responds 1♠?

Hand G Hand H Do you open Hand G?

- | | |
|---------|----------|
| ♠ Q72 | ♠ KQJ104 |
| ♥ AJ763 | ♥ A5 |
| ♦ A1062 | ♦ 43 |
| ♣ 5 | ♣ 8542 |

Do you open in 2nd seat with Hand H?

Hand J Hand K With Hand J you open 1NT and partner responds 3♣. Your partnership plays this as a good 6+ card ♣ suit, with slam interest. So what do you bid?

- | | |
|---------|---------|
| ♠ KJ52 | ♠ A84 |
| ♥ A94 | ♥ K82 |
| ♦ AK105 | ♦ QJ6 |
| ♣ Q5 | ♣ 10643 |

With Hand K partner opens 1NT, what do you bid.

Never deny a 4 card major

Board 14 from Wednesday 15th

Dealer: ♠ KQ108
East ♥ K5
Love all ♦ KJ984
♣ 65

West	North (C)	East	South (E)
-	-	pass	pass
1♣	1♦ (1)	pass	1NT (2)
all pass			

♠ 763	N	♠ J9
♥ A8	W E	♥ J10943
♦ A102	S	♦ 765
♣ A10983		♣ KJ2
	♠ A542	
	♥ Q762	
	♦ Q3	
	♣ Q74	

‘Expert Table’

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

- (1) What did you do with this North Hand C in this week’s quiz? Double is wrong because you cannot cope with a 1♥ response from partner – a 1♠ rebid would then show a much better hand, one that was too strong to simply overcall 1♠. A 1♦ overcall is correct, this does not deny a 4 card major.
- (2) And what did you do with this South Hand E in this week’s quiz? You have enough to bid and should bid 1♥. A 1NT bid is incorrect as it denies a 4 card major.
- (3) When partner bids ♠’s this hand is worth another bid.

And what happened? 1NT made exactly (of course it should go one down on the ‘obvious’ ♣ lead) but scored badly anyway as 2♠ was either making or making +1 at other tables.

The bottom lines: -

- An overcall does not deny a 4 card major.
- If partner overcalls and you wish to bid, do not deny an unbid major.

Don't pre-empt and then bid again

Board 8 from Friday 17th

How many times do I say the same thing over and over again in the news-sheets? And the culprit here most certainly reads them – shame it's in one ear (eye) and out the other.

Dealer: ♠ AKQ985
West ♥ AK953
Love all ♦ 9
 ♣ 8

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

♠ 4	N	♠ J652
♥ 4	W E	♥ 1072
♦ AQJ106532	S	♦ 87
♣ A73		♣ QJ54
	♠ 107	
	♥ QJ86	
	♦ K4	
	♣ K10962	

- (1) What would you open with this West Hand ? It's a matter of style but 5♦ is probably best. I would not argue with 4♦, 1♦ or even a strong 2♦.
- (2) The pre-empt has made it difficult for North. He did not wish to double in case partner passed and so had little choice but 4♠.
- (3) This 5♦ bid is ridiculous, especially with me leaning over your shoulder. If you think it's worth 5♦ (I won't argue) then bid it first go. This 2nd bid allows N-S to find the best contract.
- (4) And that they did.

And what happened? 5♥ made exactly (as would 4♠ which thus scores less). Some West's did not pre-empt and so N-S played in just 4♥ at three tables.

The bottom lines: -

- Pre-empt to the limit first go.
- Do not bid again having pre-empted.
- 4♦ (and 4♣) are rarely used as pre-empts and I prefer to play Namyats.

Regular Psyching

Board 17 from Wednesday 22nd, love all

We all know the club rules – no psyching please. Now you may recall that Thorlief was banned from the club partly because of his repeated psyching (he maintains that he can bid whatever he likes whenever he likes – not at our club). He was actually evicted when he punched somebody in the club. Now the Wednesday club is not strictly under my control and he has made an unwelcome appearance. Instead of keeping a low profile, he again psyches!

North (J)	South (K)	<u>Table A</u>			
		West	North	East	South
♠ KJ52	♠ A84	-	1NT	pass	3NT (1)
♥ A94	♥ K82	all pass			
♦ AK105	♦ QJ6	<u>Table B</u>			
		West	North	East	South
♣ Q5	♣ 10643	-	1NT	pass	3♣ (1)
		pass	3NT	all pass	

Table A: Pretty obvious bidding, and that at most tables playing a strong NT.

Table B: But not at Thorlief's table, he found a 3♣ bid at (1). Now East held ♣AJ952 and asked North what the 3♣ bid was, North replied that it was a long (6+) strong suit, with slam aspirations. This, indeed, is probably the most common meaning of the bid. The bid here had the intended effect of inhibiting the otherwise obvious ♣ lead and East was understandably peeved when he saw dummy. He asked South for an explanation and South rudely said that he refused to say anything. East correctly reported the incident to me.

And what happened? E-W were awarded the extra trick that was obtained at other tables when a ♣ was led. N-S were given a zero on the board.

The bottom lines: -

- Many players at the club are inexperienced and cannot cope with psyches. Psyching is discouraged. Repeated Psyches will always receive a zero score.
- Players who repeatedly psyche will be barred from the Monday/Friday club and I will also use my (considerable) influence to get them banned from the Wednesday club.
- Alex's partners should heed this.

Cheating again?

Now let's look into this incident a little deeper and consider the North Hand J. What did you bid in this week's quiz? It is maximum with an excellent card in partner's 6+ card suit and should most certainly cooperate in the search for slam. So why did this North not bid, say, a 3♦ cue bid? 3NT is the weakest possible bid, there is no logical explanation from an experienced player unless he knows that his partner psyches in these situations?

If this latter hypothesis is true then that is cheating and is most certainly not allowed in any club; the pair (Alex/Thorlief) will be closely monitored and will members please report dubious tactics to me (psyching, bidding after partner's long pause etc. - also by Alex/Jeff).

The bottom line. You are not allowed to make an inferior bid because you think that partner may be psyching. This is 'fielding' the psyche and is against the rules.

An Easy game missed

Board 6 from Wednesday 22nd, E-W vul

North	South (H)
♠ 8765	♠ KQJ104
♥ K92	♥ A5
♦ AQJ2	♦ 43
♣ K7	♣ 8542

Table A

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

Table B

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

all pass

Table A: Fairly obvious up to (3). Now when the hand was over (making 10 tricks) South apparently criticized North's 2♠ bid, saying he should bid 3♠. Obviously total nonsense, North's bidding is beyond reproach; with this great suit South should simply bid 4♠ at (3).

Table B: So did you open this South Hand H in this week's quiz? I did. If you simply add up the points it's ten and so totals just 19 for the rule of 20. But ♠KQJ10x is not 6 points, it's more like 8. A comfortable opener in my book.

2NT (3) is the Jacoby 2NT and 4♠ (4) shows a minimum opener with no shortage.

And what happened? 4♠ was bid at 4 tables out of six and easily made.

The bottom line. KQJ10x is more than 6 points!

The Jacoby 2NT

The Jacoby 2NT convention is used primarily in 5 card major systems when partner has opened 1♥/♠. Traditionally a 2NT bid is a balanced 11-12, but this can always be bid after first bidding something else and so the direct 2NT bid is free as a conventional bid.

The Jacoby 2NT bid promises 4 card support for partner's major and is generally around 13-16 points. It asks partner to describe his hand further. There are various versions of responses to this artificial 2NT bid, probably the best (and most popular) is :-

After 1♥ - 2NT

3♣ = ♣ shortage
3♦ = ♦ shortage
3♥ = good hand with no shortage
3♠ = ♠ shortage
3NT = average hand with no shortage
4♣ = a 5 card ♣ suit
4♦ = a 5 card ♦ suit
4♥ = poor hand with no shortage
(fast arrival)

After 1♠ - 2NT

3♣ = ♣ shortage
3♦ = ♦ shortage
3♥ = ♥ shortage
3♠ = good hand with no shortage
3NT = average hand with no shortage
4♣ = a 5 card ♣ suit
4♦ = a 5 card ♦ suit
4♥ = a 5 card ♥ suit
4♠ = poor hand with no shortage
(fast arrival)

All subsequent sequences are game forcing, a suit bid being a cue bid. A shortage bid may be a singleton or void. A subsequent cue bid of a shortage suit would show a void. A good 5 card 2nd suit is bid in preference to showing a singleton.

2♦ by whom?

Board 10 from Friday 24th

Dealer: ♠ KJ5
East ♥ 52
both vul ♦ QJ4
♣ AKJ42

♠ Q72	N	♠ A104
♥ AJ763	W E	♥ Q8
♦ A1062	S	♦ K975
♣ 5		♣ 10873
	♠ 9863	
	♥ K1094	
	♦ 83	
	♣ Q96	

Table A

West (G)	North (D)	East	South (B)
-	-	pass	pass
pass (1)	1NT (2)	pass	2♣ (3)
pass	2♦	pass	pass (4)
pass			

Table B

West	North	East	South
-	-	pass	pass
1♥ (1)	2♣ (5)	2♦ (6)	pass
pass (7)	pass		

Table A: (1) Did you open this West hand G in this week's quiz? It's a borderline opener, pass is OK but it conforms with the rule of 20. I would open 1♥ as there is an easy 2♦ rebid, and 3rd seat is an additional incentive to open 'light'.

(2) What did you open with this North hand D in this week's quiz? 1NT is best, if you open 1♣ then you have no sensible rebid (other than a rather unsatisfactory 2♣) over partner's expected 1♥.

(3) And what did you bid with this South hand B in this week's quiz? Obviously you must pass; if you bid 2♣ Stayman then that will work out fine if partner responds 2♥ or 2♠, but what if he bids 2♦? ...

(4) See what I mean. A silly 3-2 fit and it could have been worse (2-2). To bid 2♥ or 2♠ here is weak but promises a 5 card suit.

Table B: (1) This West chose to open, so would I.

(5) A 2♣ overcall is best with this North hand.

(6) Sometimes you have to stretch when there is interference and I think that 2♦ here is OK from a passed hand.

(7) And opposite a passed partner West can happily pass.

And what happened? 2♦ by North went two down for a virtual bottom. 2♦ by East made or made +2 at other tables.

The bottom lines: -

- Generally speaking you need invitational values (so 8+) to bid Stayman.
- There are just two exceptions when you can bid Stayman with less: -
 - (a) weak 4441 type hands (short ♣'s) when you pass any response.
 - (b) weak hands 5-4 or 4-5 in the majors, when you pass a 2♥/♠ response and convert a 2♦ response into your 5 card major.

Is a reverse forcing?

Board 24 from Friday 24th

Dealer: ♠ 109543
West ♥ 4
Love all ♦ 10875
♣ K105

♠ K872	N	♠ Q
♥ J975	W E	♥ AQ82
♦ QJ64	S	♦ AK3
♣ 6		♣ A8742
	♠ AJ6	
	♥ K1063	
	♦ 92	
	♣ QJ93	

Table A

West	North	East (F)	South
pass	pass	1♣	pass
1♦ (1)	pass	2♥ (2)	pass
2NT (3)	pass	3NT	all pass

Table B

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

Table A: (1) It's a matter of style/system if you respond 1♦ or 1♥ here.

(2) A reverse. Again, it's a matter of style/system if you play a reverse as forcing after a one level response. In Standard American it is forcing.

(3) This 2NT bid is obviously wrong, what happened is that West had his hand mis-sorted and was looking at ♠K872 ♥J97 ♦QJ654 ♣6 (Hand A in this week's quiz). So what did you bid with Hand A in the quiz at (3)? I would still bid 3♥! A Moysian fit should play well when you can ruff ♣'s with the short trump hand.

Table B: (1) This West chose to respond 1♥, fine.

(4) What an underbid! I would bid 4♥ or else a 3♠ splinter.

(5) Pass is a very real option here. Luckily for East this player chose to bid on.

(6) And East finally bid the game.

And what happened? 3NT went two down. 4♥ was bid at most tables; it should make despite the bad break and ♥K offside. It made plus one at one table but went minus one at others.

The bottom lines: -

- A 19 point hand with 4 card support for partner's major is worth more than a simple raise, jump to game if there is no shortage to splinter.

Bidding Quiz Answers

Hand A: 3♥ or 2NT. Whether or not you play partner's reverse as forcing this hand is worth another bid. Partner has just 4♥'s but with a singleton♣ and thus the possibility of ruffing♣'s in the short trump hand the Moysian fit should play well. Thus I would bid 3♥, but 2NT is obviously very reasonable and is what I suspect most of you chose?

Hand B: Pass. You cannot cope with a 2♦ response if you try Stayman.

Hand C: 1♦. Double is a poor option as you are fixed over a 1♥ response. A 1♦ overcall here is not denying a 4 card major.

Hand D: 1NT. If you open 1♣ then what do you rebid over a 1♥ reply? A 2♣ rebid is possible but does not show the strength/shape of the hand. A good rule is that if you can describe your hand accurately with one bid – do so.

Hand E: 1♥. You certainly have enough to bid and partner's overcall does not deny a 4 card major. 1NT is a very poor bid as the♣ 'stop' is poor and you may miss a major suit fit.

Hand F: (a) 1♣. It's not good enough for a strong opening.

(b) 2♥. A reverse and showing a good 16+ points. This is a very good hand and partner's 1♦ response has improved it, so bidding 2♥ is risky if partner may pass it; but a reverse is forcing in Standard American.

(c) 4♥ or a 3♠ splinter. This hand is certainly worth game after a 4-4♥ fit is discovered.

(d) 2NT. This shows 18-19 points, fine. 2♥ would be a (forcing) reverse but is pointless as partner has (generally) denied♥'s. 3NT is 'incorrect' as most experienced pairs play this as showing a good hand with a long (semi)solid♣ suit.

Hand G: 1♥. It conforms with the rule of 20 and with an easy 2♦ rebid is a sound 1♥ opener in 1st, 2nd or 3rd seat. I may pass in 4th seat.

Hand H: 1♠. If you add up the 'points' and two longest suits it's only 19 and so does not conform to the rule of 20. But ♠KQJ10x is not just six points, it's well worth an opener in any seat.

Hand J: 3♦. Partner's bid shows an excellent 6+ card♣ suit, you are maximum with an excellent card in♣'s and should cue bid the♦A in search of the best slam. 3NT is not correct as it shows a minimum and/or very weak♣'s.

Hand K: 3NT, of course.



Mon 27/12/04	N-S winners		E-W winners	
	1 st Alex/Jeff	61 %	1 st Knut/Age	63 %
	2 nd Clive/Ken	57 %	2 nd Gisli/Niklas	61 %
Wed 29/12/04	1 st Chuck/Louis	63 %	2 nd Margit/Beryl	60 %
Fri 31/12/04	N-S winners		E-W winners	
	1 st Paul-Eric/Terry	58 %	1 st Gisli/Niklas	55 %
	2 nd Clive/Ken	56 %	2 nd Bjorn/Kenneth	54 %

Bidding Quiz

Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A you are playing Acol and partner opens a weak 1NT (12-14). What do you bid?
♠ AKQ5	♠ 7632	
♥ A	♥ J742	With Hand B you open 1♣ and partner bids 1♦
♦ KJ42	♦ A9	(a) what do you bid?
♣ Q1065	♣ AKJ	(b) suppose you bid 1♥ and partner bids 1♠, what do you do?
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C LHO passes as does partner. RHO opens 1♦ and you pass, LHO raises to 2♦ and partner doubles. What do you do?
♠ 1095	♠ A765	
♥ 97	♥ AQ3	
♦ KJ109	♦ Q53	With Hand D you elect to open 1♣ in 3 rd seat. Partner bids 1♥ and RHO overcalls 2♦, what do you do?
♣ 10542	♣ 963	
Hand E	Hand F	Both vulnerable; what, if anything, do you open with Hand E?
♠ QJ9	♠ 82	
♥ KJ7642	♥ 108	
♦ -	♦ K109876	Both vulnerable; what, if anything, do you open with Hand F?
♣ J874	♣ KQ10	
Hand G	Hand H	With Hand G RHO opens 1♦, what do you bid?
♠ K1043	♠ AKQ5	With Hand H partner opens 1♣.
♥ 95	♥ A	(a) What do you bid?
♦ AJ42	♦ KJ42	Suppose you choose 1♦, then
♣ A52	♣ Q1065	(b) What do you bid after partner rebids 1♥?

Look for the 4-4 fit.

Board 24 from Wednesday 29th

Dealer: ♠ 7632
West ♥ J742
Love all ♦ A9
♣ AKJ

♠ 1094 N ♠ J8
♥ 10863 W E ♥ KQ95
♦ Q73 S ♦ 10865
♣ 987 ♣ 432

♠ AKQ5
♥ A
♦ KJ42
♣ Q1065

Table A

West	North(B)	East	South (H)
pass	1♣	pass	1♦ (1)
pass	1♥ (2)	pass	1♠ (3)
pass	2♠ (4)	pass	4NT
pass	5♥	dbl	5NT
pass	6♦	pass	7♠ (5)
all pass			

Table B

West	North(B)	East	South (A)
pass	1NT	pass	6NT (6)
all pass			

- Table A: (1) There's no need to leap about and 1♦ is the best bid, in search of a fit.
(2) What did you bid at (2) with this North hand B in this week's quiz? Of course you should not deny a 4 card major, even motley suits like this; 1NT would be a very poor bid here.
(3) Natural and forcing (this pair play a jump to 2♠ as 4th suit forcing in this sequence).
(4) And of course North would never deny 4 card support.
(5) There is a king missing, but because of East's double South was pretty sure that it was the 'useless' ♥K and so he bid the grand.

Table B: (6) What did you respond to partner's weak 1NT opening with this South hand A in this week's quiz? You have 19 points opposite partner's balanced 12-14, that's 31-33 so not usually enough for a small slam unless there is a fit. Regardless of it being pairs scoring I don't like this bull in a china shop approach. I would bid 2♣ Stayman and if there is no ♠ fit then look for a minor suit fit for slam.

And what happened? 6NT needs the ♦ finesse and so went down. 6♠ was bid at most tables and easily makes – the power of the 4-4 fit, simply ruff the 3rd round of ♦'s instead of finessing. 7♠ luckily made when declarer ruffed the 3rd round of ♦'s and the ♦Q came down. 6NT or 7♠ are not the best contracts, 6♠ is.

The bottom lines: -

- Never deny a 4 card major.
- A 4-4 fit will usually provide an extra trick.
- If you want to know how to find a 4-4 minor suit fit after Stayman has failed to locate a fit, you can use SARS (shape Asking Relays after Stayman). It's described in my book on NT openings - ask me if you want to borrow it, but it's a bit advanced.

The Support Double

Board 20 from Friday 31st

Dealer: ♠ 82
West ♥ 108
Both vul ♦ K109876
♣ KQ10

♠ QJ9	N	♠ A765
♥ KJ7642	W E	♥ AQ3
♦ -	S	♦ Q53
♣ J874		♣ 963

♠ K1043
♥ 95
♦ AJ42
♣ A52

West (E)	North (F)	East (D)	South (G)
pass (1)	pass (2)	1♣ (3)	pass (4)
1♥	2♦ (5)	dbl (6)	pass (7)
3♥	pass	4♥ (8)	dbl (9)
all pass			

- (1) Did you open with hand E in this week's quiz? A nice hand but I would not open it. It's two shy of the rule of 20. Pass or a weak 2♥ are the two options, I would pass as it will play well in ♠'s if partner has that suit.
- (2) And did you open hand F? I would open a weak 2♦.
- (3) A poor opener, but it's 3rd seat so anything goes.
- (4) What did you do with this South hand G in this week's quiz? It's the best hand at the table, but there's nothing to say – you cannot double with just two poor ♥'s.
- (5) This hand is not good enough for a vulnerable two level overcall. A weak 3♦ jump is acceptable I suppose but it should have opened a weak 2♦.
- (6) So what did you bid with this East hand D in this week's quiz? Normally one would simply support ♥'s with a 2♥ bid, but there is a convention that enables you to distinguish between four and three card support – The Support Double. So when playing this convention an immediate 2♥ raise promises 4 card support and a double is 3 card support.
- (7) Again, there's no rush for South to say anything – let's see what happens.
- (8) East has shown his hand exactly and with this absolute minimum he should pass. However, this was an unfamiliar partnership and I believe that East was not sure that West played Support Doubles and so supported here.
- (9) Partner has made a vulnerable two level overcall and so South assumed that E-W did not have the values for game.

And what happened? 4♥ doubled went one down for a top to N-S.

The bottom lines: -

- The support double is an excellent convention – but only use it if you know that partner plays it!
- If you don't play support doubles then the double is traditionally for penalties.
- A vulnerable two level overcall should be close to opening values.

It's still take-out by a passed hand

Board 22 from Friday 31st

Dealer: ♠ 1095
East ♥ 97
E-W vul ♦ KJ109
♣ 10542

West	North(C)	East	South
-	-	pass	pass (1)
1♦	pass	2♦	dbl (2)
pass	pass (3)	pass	

♠ AK84	N	♠ 72
♥ A108	W E	♥ Q62
♦ A8653	S	♦ Q742
♣ K		♣ AJ73
	♠ QJ63	
	♥ KJ543	
	♦ -	
	♣ Q986	

Pretty much a disaster for N-S,
what went wrong?

- (1) The hand conforms with the rule of 20 but I prefer pass as it may be easier to describe the hand better at a later opportunity.
- (2) And didn't it turn out well! A perfect take-out double at this vulnerability.
- (3) Unfortunately North was confused by the fact that partner had initially passed. What did you bid with this North hand C in this week's quiz? 3♣ is theoretically correct and 2♠ is reasonable, but I prefer 2NT – it's a trifle light but safe as you know that partner will not leap about as he is a passed hand. Anyway, North cannot pass.

And what happened? 2♦ doubled made an overtrick for a near top to E-W. The bottom lines:

- If the opponents have bid and supported a suit, then a low-level double is for take-out.
- A passed hand can still double for take-out. It is rarely correct to pass partner's take-out double

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: 2♣, Stayman. A combined 31-33 points is not usually enough for 6NT without a long suit, so look for a fit. If no ♠ fit materialises then you should then look for a minor suit fit, how you do that is up to you. If there is no fit at all then a quantitative 4NT will suffice.
- Hand B: (a) 1♥, never deny a 4 card major.
(b) 2♠, do not deny 4 card support.
- Hand C: Partner's double is for take-out. Nothing is attractive but there are three reasonable options; 2♠, 2NT or 3♣. The one thing that you cannot do is pass!
- Hand D: 2♥ or pass. It's an absolute minimum opener and you can show that by passing. But you do have decent ♥ support and so 2♥ is also sensible. But actually there is a better option; if you play Support Doubles then a double here shows 3 card ♥ support (a direct 2♥ would promise 4 ♥'s).
- Hand E: I prefer pass. 2♥ is acceptable but I don't like it as partner may have ♠'s and this would be very nice support.
- Hand F: 2♦.
- Hand G: Pass. Double would be acceptable over a 1♥ opening but not over 1♦.
- Hand H: (a) 1♦, look for the 4-4 fit.
(b) 1♠, look for the 4-4 fit. Some players play that 1♠ is either natural or 4th suit forcing. Others play that 1♠ is natural and a jump to 2♠ is the 4th suit.