

Winners		Runners-up		
Mon 29 th	N-S Bengt M & Terry	69%	2 nd Bob P & Dave C	60%
	E-W Kees & Kenneth	63%	2 nd Derek & Gerard	53%
Wed 31 st	Bengt M & Kenneth	60%	2 nd Clive & Terry	56%
Fri 2 nd	Bill Peters & Clive	59%	2 nd = Bob P & Dave	57%
			2 nd = Bill Noe & Mike G	57%

Bidding Quiz

Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.

Hand A

Hand B

With Hand A you open 1♣ (or 1♦) and LHO overcalls 1♠. This is passed round to you, what do you do?

♠ 86

♠ 52

♥ Q74

♥ A73

♦ KJ87

♦ AJ8742

With Hand B partner opens 1♣ and RHO overcalls 3♥ (weak). What do you do?

♣ AK43

♣ 103

Hand C

Hand D

With Hand C it's love all. RHO opens 1♦, what do you do?

♠ 542

♠ A10932

♥ Q1053

♥ AJ95

♦ KQ5

♦ 32

With Hand D it's favourable vulnerability. Partner opens 1♣ and RHO overcalls 1♠. What do you bid?

♣ AK3

♣ QJ

Hand E

Hand F

With Hand E partner opens 1♦ and RHO overcalls 1♠, what do you do?

♠ 9

♠ Q3

♥ Q10842

♥ A862

♦ J9842

♦ AKQJ4

With Hand F you are red and the opponents are green.

♣ 65

♣ 109

(a) What do you open?

(b) Suppose you choose 1NT, LHO bids 2♦ (a single suited hand) and later 3♣ (long ♣'s). Partner doubles, what do you do?

Bidding Sequences Quiz

There is no interference in the following sequences: -

G 2♣ - 2♦ - 3NT

what is 3NT?

H 3NT

what is a 3NT opening?

Play Quiz

J ♦AK10 ♦9854

You are playing in NoTrump with loads of entries to both hands. How do you play this suit for 3 tricks?

K ♦AK109 ♦854

You are playing in NoTrump with loads of entries to both hands. How do you play this suit for 3 tricks?

A one-level penalty?

Board 25 from Wednesday 31st

Especially at favourable vulnerability, think about a penalty of an overcall rather than an 'automatic' 3NT: -

Dealer: ♠ 86
South ♥ Q74
E-W vul ♦ KJ87
♣ AK43

Table A

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

♠ 4	N	♠ KQJ75
♥ 103	W E	♥ K862
♦ A1095	S	♦ Q64
♣ 1097652		♣ 8
	♠ A10932	
	♥ AJ95	
	♦ 32	
	♣ QJ	

Table B

West	North(A)	East	South(D)
-	1♣	1♠	pass (2)
pass	dbl (3)	pass	pass (4)
pass			

Table A: (1) I always open 1♣ when 4-4 in the minors, but not everybody agrees with that philosophy and it's really up to you.

(2) What did you bid with this South hand D in this week's quiz? Look at the vulnerability! Table B got it right. This South chose to show his 4 card ♥ suit with a negative double, a poor choice in my opinion.

Table B: (2) This South found the best bid. At this vulnerability defending 1♠ doubled must be better than bidding a non-certain non-vulnerable game.

(3) What did you bid with this North hand A in this week's quiz. There are very few hand when you should not double (playing negative doubles) and this certainly is not one of them. Double is automatic with this hand.

(4) Thank you partner.

And what happened? 3NT was one down. 1♠ doubled cost 200 and was a near top for N-S. This was only beaten when East ran to 2♥ at another table and 2♥ doubled went for 1100.

The bottom lines: -

- With 5 decent trumps over an overcaller, think penalty...
- ... especially at favourable vulnerability.
- Don't forget the 'automatic' re-opening double, even at the one level!

A poor bid that turned out lucky?

Board 22 from Wednesday 31st

That's what one member called my 3NT bid at Table B. I disagree. It was a good bid that turned out lucky!

Dealer: ♠ AJ9643
East ♥ J2
E-W vul ♦ K10
♣ J52

♠ 52	N	♠ KQ10
♥ A73	W E	♥ Q
♦ AJ8742	S	♦ Q65
♣ 103		♣ AK8764

♠ 87
♥ K1098654
♦ 93
♣ Q9

Table A

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

Table B

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

Table A: (1) What did you bid with this West hand B in this week's quiz? The problem is that South has made life difficult for you as you do not have the values for a 3 or 4 level bid. But if you pass then partner will be fixed - he does not know that you have a good 9 count and an all-important ♥ stop. Now I guess that you could pass but that's a bit feeble for me. But the problem with 4♦ is that it goes pass 3NT and you may well get too high.

(2) With a decent 16 count East obviously bids game.

Table B: (1) But you all know me (if 3NT is a viable option – then bid it). I was West here and that's what I bid.

(3) East went into a bit of a huddle here, but finally came to the correct conclusion that South may have made it awkward for partner and that there was no slam.

And what happened? 3NT made exactly for a clear top. 5♦ doubled went two down and other E-W's were in ♣ or ♦ partscores.

At the end of the hand East (let's call him Grumpy) stated that 3NT at (1) was a poor bid and it was a lucky result. I disagree. 3NT is the only sensible bid, and I said that I bet that Chuck would agree. I gave the hand to Chuck later and it took him about 3 seconds to come up with 3NT.

The bottom lines: -

- When you open and LHO makes a 3 level pre-emptive overcall then 3NT from partner does not promise the 13-15 points that it would without the intervention. The pre-empt has taken away all of the bidding space and 3NT shows a moderate hand with a good stop in the overcalled suit.
- If the opposition pre-empt at the 3 level (so 7 cards) then Axx is a perfect holding in their suit. 3NT will often make as you can hold up twice if necessary. On this particular deal it was only necessary to hold up once as partner had a ♥.
- If you incorrectly criticise my bidding then expect it to be written up. Do it too often and I'll add names.

Play Benjamin (or Multi 2♦)

Board 13 from Wednesday 31st

Having to open 3NT (or 2♣ - 2♦ - 3NT) with a balanced 25+ points really sucks. 3 out of 5 pairs failed to reach slam with a combined 34 count. Most decent players realise this these days and if they do not play a strong 2♦ (or Multi 2♦ including a strong hand) then they play the Kokish relay (see next page). Look at these disasters from Wednesday: -

Dealer: ♠ Q1072
North ♥ Q82
Both vul ♦ 103
♣ J863

♠ K65 N ♠ AJ43
♥ K753 W E ♥ A109
♦ J42 S ♦ AKQ6
♣ Q95 ♣ AK

♠ 98
♥ J64
♦ 9875
♣ 10742

Table A

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

Table B

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

Table A: (1) This West did not know what to do, and so bid his 4 card major.

Table B: (1) This West did not know what to do, and so passed.

So what should West bid at (1)? What is 4♣ - is it Gerber or Stayman? What is 4NT?

Well, I am not going to answer these questions because they are simply ridiculous situations. These days all of the experts know that having to bid 3NT to show a balanced 25+ is totally bonkers.

I have often recommended Benjamin, or else Multi 2♦, so that you can show the big hand by opening 2♦ and then bidding 2NT - and then partner has no problem using Stayman and Transfers or whatever. But for those players who have only the one strong bid (2♣) then they do not bid 3NT (either directly or after 2♣) but open 2♣ and then use the Kokish Relay (next page).

3NT with a big hand? – don't be silly.

What is 3NT in the sequence 2♣ - 2♦ - 3NT? Answer – a very silly bid!

Hand 1	Hand 2	
♠ 8632	♠ 86532	You hold one of these hands and partner opens 3NT (25+) Or else it goes 2♣ - 2♦ - 3NT to show 25+.
♥ 74	♥ 4	Should you pass or bid Stayman with Hand 1?
♦ J872	♦ J872	Should you pass or transfer with Hand 2?
♣ 843	♣ 8433	Obviously it's a complete lottery and most players past the beginner's stage play have some way to show the big balanced hand below the level of 3NT (Benjamin, Multi or Kokish).

Traditionally 3NT here (and/or an opening of 3NT) are used to show very big balanced hands, 25+ points. But there is absolutely no doubt that this is very silly as it inhibits the use of transfers/Stayman/Baron whatever by a very weak responder. One solution is to play 2♦ as also a strong bid (or else Multi with a strong balanced hand included) so that the sequence 2♦ - 2♥ - 2NT shows 25+. However, many players, especially from America, are not enlightened enough to play two strong artificial bids. But if you play 2♣ as your only strong bid then one North American player has actually come up with a scheme to solve the problem –

The Kokish relay: -

After a strong 2♣ and 2♦ response (negative or waiting – however you play it)

Then 2♥ = either natural with a ♥ suit or 25+ balanced.

Responder then always bids 2♠ (the Kokish relay which says nothing at all) and –

Opener then defines his hand: 2NT = 25+ balanced
 Any other bid = strong ♥ opener.

Note that the Kokish relay works fine with 2♦ waiting/2♥ negative when responder bids 2♦ but when responder bids 2♥ (totally bust) then there is a problem. But at least the Kokish relay solves the problem most of the time. If you want to solve it completely then play Benjamin twos or the Multi 2♦ or play 2♦ negative to 2♣.

The Gambling 3NT

As we saw above it is obviously very silly to use the 3NT opening as a very strong balanced hand, so what is the best use? Undoubtedly it's the 'gambling' 3NT.

There are various treatments but the best is a completely solid minor suit AKQJxxx(x) and **absolutely no** outside ace or king. Playing this treatment partner knows exactly what you have and will only pass when he has stoppers in 3 suits.

If responder does not want to play in 3NT (because a suit is wide open) then he bids 4♣ (pass or correct).

Of course the gambling 3NT is not a weak hand and there may be slam. If responder is interested in slam he can bid 4♦ which asks opener to show his singleton (or void).

Responses to the 4♦ shape ask are:

- 4♥ = ♥ shortage
- 4♠ = ♠ shortage
- 4NT = no shortage (2227 or 2272)
- 5♣ = shortage in the other minor (responder should be able to work out which one!).

Don't double with a flat hand

Board 17 from Monday 29th

I have stressed this many times, but some people still believe that they should double with an opening hand. That concept went out in the stone age – a double is in principle short in the suit opened and playable in the other 3 suits, that's why it's called a take-out double! With 15+ you should say something, but with less than 15 and a flat hand, then pass - or accept the consequences: -

Dealer: ♠ A1073
North ♥ K2
Love all ♦ AJ73
 ♣ 1076

Table A

West	North	East(C)	South
-	1♦	dbl (1)	redbl (2)
pass	pass	1♥	dbl (3)
all pass			

♠ J98	N	♠ 542
♥ J64	W E	♥ Q1053
♦ 10642	S	♦ KQ5
♣ J94		♣ AK3
	♠ KQ6	
	♥ A987	
	♦ 98	
	♣ Q852	

- (1) What did you bid with this East hand C in this week's quiz? If you did anything but pass, then please read my beginner's pages on take-out doubles (they are on the web). A take-out double should be short in the suit bid unless very strong. This flat hand is nowhere near good enough for 1NT (15-18).
- (2) 9+ points. Often a mis-fit (as here) looking for the penalty.
- (3) Penalties.

And what happened? 1♥ doubled went two down for 300 to N-S and a virtual top (on a partscore deal).

The bottom lines: -

- A take-out double should be short in the suit bid.
- Do not double 'to show points'.
- You need (nearly) opening values to double, but that does not mean that you should double just because you have opening values.
- Re-read the above sentence, it appears that even some very good players do not understand it.

When your hand improves – part 1

Board 28 from Wednesday 31st

Sometimes a hand (this North hand) is not worth an opener, but improves as the bidding progresses: -

Dealer: ♠ K1084
West ♥ K75
N-S vul ♦ 64
♣ AJ87

♠ 63	N	♠ J97
♥ QJ63	W E	♥ 9842
♦ K10	S	♦ AJ953
♣ KQ653		♣ 9

♠ AQ52
♥ A10
♦ Q872
♣ 1042

Table A

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

- (1) This hand is worth a 1♣ opening (20 for the rule of 20).
- (2) But this hand is not quite worth an opening (19).
- (3) Negative. I play this as values and promising just one of the unbid majors.
- (4) Now North was expecting a ♥ response, but with the 4-4 ♠ fit and great ♣'s sitting over the overcaller the hand is now worth a shot at game, even opposite a minimal opener.

And what happened? 3 out of 7 bid to 4♠ and made. But I don't know the bidding at the other tables.

The bottom lines: -

- Obey the rule of 20
- Upgrade a hand when RHO calls a suit in which you hold a values.
- Upgrade a hand if a 4-4 major fit comes to light.

When your hand improves – part 2

Board 18 from Friday 2nd

You need 6 points to respond – or do you? None out of 4 E-W pairs found the 5-4 ♥ fit here: -

Dealer: ♠ J65
East ♥ A95
N-S vul ♦ 6
♣ A109432

Table A
West(E) North East South
- - 1♦ 1♠
pass (1) 2♠ pass (2) pass
3♦ (3) 3♠ (4) 4♦ all pass

♠ 9 N ♠ A432
♥ Q10842 W E ♥ K765
♦ J9842 S ♦ AQ73
♣ 65 ♣ K
♠ KQ1087
♥ J
♦ K105
♣ QJ87

- (1) What did you bid with this West hand E(a) in this week's quiz? Now 3 points is not worth a response – but how many 'points' is this West hand really? It is far more than 3! Because: -
 - 1- You have a ♦ fit – especially if you play a short ♣ (so 1♦ promises 4♦'s).
 - 2- RHO's ♠ bid has greatly improved your hand – shortage in the opponent's suit is great, especially if you have a fit.
 - 3- 5-5 is great shape.
 - 4- The hand has a ten and superb intermediates.With this hand I would negative double (to show 4+ ♥'s) and if partner does not like ♥'s there's no problem as you can retreat into ♦'s if necessary.
- (2) East can do nothing here.
- (3) And West has lost the chance to mention his ♥'s.
- (4) It's one above the Law, but the good shape makes it fine.

And what happened? There were similar rambling auctions at every table, with the final contracts being 3♦, 4♦, 5♦ (by E-W) and 5♣ by North. Only 3♦ made. 4♥ is a nice contract.

The bottom lines: -

- When you have 5 cards in the suit that partner opens, your hand improves.
- When you have a singleton in the opponent's suit and a known fit with partner, your hand improves.
- 5-5 shape is great, especially if partner has opened one of the suits!
- When your hand has improved enough, as for this West at (1) – then bid! It has not improved enough for 2♥ but certainly enough for a negative double.
- I like to play a short ♣, then you know that a 1♦ opening is 4+ ♦'s.
- Shape and a fit are all important. Now the 'norm' to make a 4♥ or 4♠ game is 25 'points'. Yet this deal is a perfect example of where E-W can make 4♥ with 19 'points' and N-S can make 4♠ (+1) with just 21 'points'. Incidentally, you may notice that this exceeds the expectation of 'The Law' – there are only 17 combined trumps yet 21 combined tricks. This is because both sides have a double fit.
- Do not think 'points' – think 'shape' and 'fit'.

Open 1NT and partner is the Captain

Board 25 from Friday 2nd

When you open 1NT then you have described your hand and partner is in control – often referred to as being the Captain. If he chooses to penalise the opposition then that is his decision to make – you have promised 15-17 points and at least two cards in their suit and if partner thinks that it's best to go for the penalty, then **do not** over-rule him.

Dealer:	♠ A876					
North	♥ Q95		West	North(F)	East	South
E-W vul	♦ 2		-	pass	pass	pass
	♣ AJ652		1NT (1)	2♦ (2)	pass	2♥ (3)
			pass	3♣ (4)	dbl (5)	pass
			3NT (6)	all pass		
♠ Q3	N	♠ J52				
♥ A862	W E	♥ J10				
♦ AKQJ4	S	♦ 765				
♣ 109		♣ KQ943				
	♠ K1094					
	♥ K743					
	♦ 10983					
	♣ 7					

- (1) What did you open with this West hand F(a) in this week's quiz? In my opinion it is acceptable to open 1NT with two doubletons, but I won't usually do it unless both are at least Qx. And with this hand you have an easy rebid if you open 1♦, I would open 1♦ with the intention of reversing with 2♥ next go. But I'm an easy going guy and won't argue if you did indeed choose a 1NT opening, it may sometimes work out best.
- (2) This pair play multi Landy and 2♦ promised a single suited hand. Of course this choice of bid is totally ridiculous and pass is obvious, even at favourable vulnerability. Perhaps North was swayed by the quality of the suit and the intermediates? (that is meant to be sarcastic). The 2♦ single-suited bid should promise a 6 card suit and it is usually unwise to make it with a minor suit of only 6 cards as you will be at the 3 level.
- (3) Pass or correct. (4) My long suit (!?) (5) Penalties, penalties, penalties.
- (6) What did you bid with this West hand F(b) in this week's quiz? I guess that this West was looking at the vulnerability. But partner is also not blind – he knows the vulnerability and has elected to go for the penalty (presumably because he does not have the values to be sure of making 3NT). You do not even have to look at your cards here – pass is automatic.

And what happened? Not surprisingly, with a combined 23 points nobody else bid the dodgy 3NT. The computer says that there are only 8 tricks in Notrump. The computer also says that E-W can make 1♣, so the silly 3♣ by North would have gone 3 down and 500 away on a partscore deal. Actually North did get what he deserved (he pushed E-W into 3NT which they would not otherwise have bid) but declarer made up for his poor bidding by making the contract +1 for 630 and a top, but the safer 300 or 500 for the penalty would still have been a complete top.

The bottom lines: -

- When you open 1NT, never remove partner's penalty double.
- When you open 1NT, never never never remove partner's penalty double at the 3 level.
- If you think that you do have to remove the penalty then obviously you should not have opened 1NT.
- Don't change horses in mid-stream. If you choose to open 1NT you cannot change your mind later.

The play's the thing

Board 3 from Friday 2nd

I don't often mention the play in the news sheets (perhaps because I'm not that good a player?). But I noted that two good players went down here and also another top player said that he would have played the hand in an inferior way: -

Dealer:	♠ 873				
South	♥ 52	West	North	East	South
E-W vul	♦ AK9	-	-	-	1NT
	♣ AKJ105	pass	4♣ (1)	pass	4♥ (2)
		pass	5♣ (3)	pass	5♥ (4)
		pass	6NT		
♠ QJ104	N	♠ 965			
♥ QJ97	W E	♥ 1043			
♦ J7	S	♦ Q632	(1) Gerber		
♣ 743		♣ 986	(2) two aces		
	♠ AK2		(3) Gerber		
	♥ AK86		(4) two kings.		
	♦ 10854				
	♣ Q2				

(3) I don't see the point of this king ask (it only helps the defence)

And what happened? Three pairs reached the slam, but two went down.

So how should you play the hand. Obviously the 12th trick has to come from the ♦ suit. In a discussion with a leading player after the game he said that he would finesse the ♦9 on the first round. Now this would have worked, but not if you swap the E-W hands. The correct play is to lay down the ♦A and then the ♦K when all follow. This ensures 3 tricks if an honour drops in two rounds or if the suit is divided 3-3. And it also caters for the unlikely ♦QJ7632 with West. All-in-all it's probably about 70%.

The bottom lines: -

- 10's are sometimes important. The ♦10 is a key card here.
- Only ask for kings (after Blackwood or Gerber) if you are interested in a grand slam.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: Dbl 'Automatic' when playing negative doubles.
- Hand B: 3NT. This does not promise a huge hand but guarantees a good ♥ stop. Any bid after a 3-level pre-empt is a lottery, but it's usually worth a shot a 3NT with Axx in the pre-empt suit.
- Hand C: Pass. Do not double 'to show opening points'. A take-out double needs to be short in the suit opened.
- Hand D: Pass. And pass partner's re-opening double.
- Hand E: Dbl (negative). Partner's ♦ opening and RHO's ♠ bid have both improved this hand enormously and it's easily worth a negative double showing 4+ ♥'s. Do not 'think points' – 'think shape'.
- Hand F: (a) 1♦ (you have a decent rebid of a 2♥ reverse). Opening 1NT is a reasonable alternative if that is your style.
(b) Pass. Absolutely automatic, you do not even have to look at your cards. Partner is the Captain and it's his decision. Do not let the vulnerability lead you into bidding 3NT – partner knows the vulnerability and has elected to double and he is in charge. If he thought that 3NT was making then he would have bid it.

Bidding Sequences Quiz Answers

- G 2♣ - 2♦ - 3NT what is 3NT? **Ans** A very silly bid! See article on Kokish Relays.
- H 3NT what is a 3NT opening? **Ans** It is silly to play this as a very strong balanced hand. The best use of the bid is the Gambling 3NT guaranteeing absolutely no ace or king outside a long running minor.

Play Quiz Answers

- J ♦AK10 ♦9854 How do you play this suit for 3 tricks?
Ans Bang down the A and K. This works if either honour is singleton or doubleton or if the suit splits 3-3. I can't be bothered to work out the odds; but it is, as Chuck said, probably better than 70%. A first round finesse is an inferior play.
- K ♦AK109 ♦854 How do you play this suit for 3 tricks?
Ans This time it is slightly different as you are able to finesse twice. So here you should take a first round finesse and play for split honours. This is around 80%.