



Last week's winners:	Monday 7/4/03	Friday 11/4/03
winners	Hans/Paul 66%	winners Hans 67 IMPS
2 nd	Don(UK)/Sid 54%	2 nd Terry 56 IMPS

When Do You Open?

12 points, 13 points, 11 points? How much to add on for long suits? How much to add on for singletons and voids? It really is too much, everybody says something different; wish there was a simple rule to define an opening hand. Look no further: -

The Rule of 20 – 1st and 2nd seat openings

♠ K10 A hand from Wednesday. Do you open or pass? At the table this hand
♥ J108 passed in 3rd seat. I said that I would open the hand in any (1st, 2nd or 3rd
♦ A863 seat) position, Chuck and Paul agree. Hans said that he would only open it
♣ A1086 in 3rd seat. So who's right? What does the rule of 20 say? This rule
indicates which hands should be opened (as opposed to passed) in 1st or
2nd seat (3rd seat may open lighter). What you do is add the length of your two longest suits to your point count. If the total is 20 or more, then open. In this case; 12 pts +4 +4 = 20, so an opener. A similar (less robust) hand appeared at the end of last week, it was an opener. This particular hand may add on a plus for 3 tens, and with two in aces (in 4 card suits!) it is a clear opener. Guess they have other rules in Holland? Actually, Chuck does have a different rule. He would open last week's hand because it contains 2 ½ quick tricks (a quick trick is an ace, a king is ½ a quick trick), this is really just another way of saying that aces and kings are good cards, quacks are not. So, a good rule if you lack ten fingers and ten toes.

The Rule of 15 – 4th seat openings

So what do you do in 4th seat? Things are different here. Partner has passed, so you will not miss game if you pass dubious openers. Also, no need for light openers or pre-empts as you can simply pass out. If you have a doubtful opener, then the ♠ suit is all-important. If a part-score battle ensues then the side with ♠'s will win. This is taken into account by the rule of 15 for 4th seat openers. You add your point count to the number of ♠'s that you hold. If the total is 15 or more, then open. The previous hand qualifies for an opener in 1st – 3rd seat but not in 4th (12 pts + 2 ♠'s = 14).

What to open? – A weak NT in 3rd Seat?

The same hand as above. Obviously you open 1♣ with the intention of rebidding 1NT (12-14). Playing a weak NT you obviously open 1NT – always? That brings me to an interesting twist, I would not open this hand in 3rd seat if playing a weak NT! – especially if playing teams or for money. In 3rd seat you may open light (not 1NT), but a minimum value weak NT in 3rd seat is very dangerous – next hand may easily have a penalty double. If you wish to open this hand playing a weak NT then I guess 1♦ (with a 2♣ rebid) is best. This goes against my general advice of opening 1♣ whenever possible, but this is not a 'real' scenario as a 1NT rebid is unavailable (it shows 15-16).

Adjusting For Shape

I have frequently said that you should deduct 1pt for a totally flat (4333 type) hand. The rule of 20 just goes to prove it, a 12 count with 4333 is not an opener. 4432 is average shape. Any other shape is good.

Open 1 of a Suit or Pre-empt?

There was a hand on Monday which was opened with 3♠ - a bid which I did not like. So I wrote down a few hands for Hans, Paul and Chuck to comment. With both vulnerable, what do you open in 1st seat? :-

♠ AQ86532 All three chose 1♠ - the correct bid. The hand complies with the rule of
♥ 5 20 and is too good for a 3♠ pre-empt. So everybody in agreement so far.
♦ KJ4
♣ 64

♠ 5 And this 2nd hand? The answers were: - Chuck 4♣, Hans 3♣, Paul 1♣
♥ 53 (possibly 3♣). I totally agree with Paul on this one. I hate a pre-emptive
♦ J72 opening of 4-of- a-minor opposite a non-passed partner, especially with
♣ AKQ10865 such a good suit – you may *easily* miss 3NT. I would never open 4 or 5
 a minor with a suit this good. This hand came from a book by Marty
 Bergen. Marty says ‘do not open at the three level with a suit headed by
the AKQ. A solid 7 card suit is too good’. Chuck queried how ancient the book was – 1995. So a recent
book by a 10 times National American champion, how can Chuck possibly question his recommended bid of
1♣? Anyway, Paul and myself think it is close between 1♣ and 3♣, preferring 1♣. In 3rd seat, open 3♣
(partner has passed). Max Hardy quotes a virtually identical hand, - ♠ 103 ♥ 7 ♦ J82 ♣ AKQJ754, and
suggests either 1♣ or pass in 1st or 2nd seat and 3♣ in 3rd. 1♣/3♣ seems right to me, I would never pass.

♠ AKJ9753 I chose this hand because it is similar to the Monday hand. This hand is
♥ 62 from a recent Max Hardy book. Paul and Chuck both opened 3♠, Hans
♦ 7 passed. What does the book say? - 4♠ (except at unfavourable
♣ 543 vulnerability), too good for 3♠. Great offence, poor defence.

♠ AK109876 So now we come to the East hand 18 from Monday, very similar.
♥ J75 Indeed, our dynamic trio all chose the same bid as they had on the
♦ J7 previous hand. My partner chose 1♠ at the table (I much prefer it to
♣ – 3♠) but it is a bit weak in points not quite conforming to the rule of 20.
 Actually, the recommended opening bid with a good suit like this is 4♠.

Hans, Paul and Chuck all disagree (with me and each other and my partner) but I have Max Hardy on my side. The problem is (as happened at our table), how do you bid the hand having opened 1♠? You cannot then convince partner that you have such a good hand without overstating the values. With an excellent offensive (and poor defensive) hand such as this, open 4♠, end of problem. If you open 3♠ then you may miss game – partner does not need much for 4♠ to make. If you chose to pass, then this would have been passed out at the table missing an easy part-score or even 4♠ making (partner had a ropey 11 count) – just goes to show the power of this hand, 20 combined points and 4♠ (luckily) made.

♠ J3 This is partner's hand (W18). Let's consider all of the opening options.
 ♥ A108 First, if partner passes, then most people would pass this hand in 3rd seat.
 ♦ 86542 4th seat would need a good hand to open (rule of 15 and he is short in
 ♣ AQ6 ♠'s), very likely to be passed out. Even if 4th seat does open, 4♠ is unlikely
 to be reached. So no good. If partner opens 1♠ then you will not reach game
 (as at our table). If partner opens 4♠ then you pass, absolutely no problem. But what if partner opens 3♠?
 Let's assume that partner has ♠KQ or ♠AQ with an honour outside. You can expect 2♦ losers (maybe
 3), 1♣ loser (maybe 2), 2♥ losers and 1♠ loser. So 6-7 losers. Partner's outside honour may cope with
 one of these and one will disappear with shortage in declarer's hand. But game is remote. Chuck seems to
 be proud of the fact that he bid 4♠ with this hand. Later, Paul and Hans both said that they would raise 3♠
 to 4♠ (how much was this influenced by the fact that they knew the hand?). Give opener a 'normal' 3♠
 pre-empt: ♠KQ108752 ♥96 ♦Q7 ♣43. Four or five losers. Would Chuck be so proud of his bid
 now? Would Hans and Paul be so quick to agree? On the actual hand, 4♠ makes because it is too good
 for a 3♠ opener – simple. Of course, ♠'s 2-2 and ♣K on-side also helped! Talk about result merchants.
 If you partner me and raise me to game on hands like this, I will go down 75% of the time – nothing to do
 with my poor declarer play, simply a lousy raise and a bad contract. Let's finish this hand off

♠ AK109876	♠ J3	with a discussion of the play. Even with this heavyweight opener, it is little better than 50% after the expected ♦ lead
♥ J75	♥ A108	– you need to bring in the ♠'s for no loser.
♦ J7	♦ 86542	Best to play for 2-2 (or singleton ♠Q). Just goes to show
♣ 3	♣ AQ6	what a poor raise to 4♠ this East hand is. Anyway, fortune smiles on you when you get the ♥K lead, obviously you

take this and then? At one table, declarer crossed to the ♠A and immediately tried the ♣finesse – it
 worked, he then pitched a ♦ on the ♣A; making +1 when the ♠'s split 2-2. This is not the best play as it
 risks going down unnecessarily if trumps split. The best line is to test trumps first; lead ♠J from table.
 Finesse or not? You cannot afford to lose the lead. If it is not covered, then rise with the ♠A. ♠K next and
 if they do not split then fall back on the ♣finesse. When trumps do split, do not risk the ♣finesse but
 simply concede 3 red suit losers (you can mess about a little, there is a very vague hope that you may be
 able to pitch a loser without resorting to the ♣finesse).

Raising Partner's Pre-empt?

- ♠ - There is just one thing in favour of raising to 4♠ on the previous East hand
- ♥ KQ105 – Chuck's point that it has two controls – you may just be lucky enough to
- ♦ KQ732 get all you losers away before the defence get going. What about this
- ♣ KQ85 hand? Again partner has opened 3♠. So 3NT or 4♠? You should pass!
Neither game contract will make.

NT rebids after a Two-level Response.

Let's suppose that we are playing a strong NT and the bidding starts 1♦ - 2♣. I stated last week that a 2NT rebid is 12-14 and 3NT is 18-19. Hans seems to have a very big problem with this and is trying to persuade Chuck and Paul that the 3NT rebid may be on lesser values with a shortage in partner's suit. He is, of course, absolutely correct – *your partnership* may define this jump to be whatever you choose. But a balanced 18-19 is standard. Let's quote a Mike Lawrence bidding book, *specifically* after this 1♦ - 2♣ sequence: -

2NT: 'this shows 12-14' (page 82)

3NT: 'Since opener would have opened 1NT with 15-17 points, his 1♦ bid denies a balanced hand in this range. Opener's 3NT bid has to show a range of some sort and the only one left is 18-19' (page 92).

So, after a 2-level response, a NT rebid shows the same hand as it would have over a 1 level response, but you simply make the bid one level higher. So how do you bid a 16 point hand with a singleton ♣? Easy, rebid 2♦, 2♥ or 2♠, depending upon your hand. What you do *not* do is lie both about the distribution *and* strength of the hand by rebidding 3NT. 3NT is *not* fast arrival or shut out (as Chuck says). It is *not* a 16 count with a singleton (as Hans says). It *is* a balanced 18-19 (as Paul and myself say). *This is standard*. If they play it differently in Holland I would be fascinated to read about it! Chuck, of course, is simply confused? Even if you are in a game forcing 2/1 situation then the 3NT rebid is still 18-19:

' This jump promises a balanced hand too good for a 1NT opening' – Better Bidding with Bergen.

' This shows a balanced hand with 18-19 points, one that would have jumped to 2NT if the response had been at the one level' – 2/1 quiz book – Max Hardy.

' Note that NT rebids do not reflect the principle of fast arrival' – 2/1 by Steve Bruno & Max Hardy.

Of course, you may play this 3NT rebid however you wish, ranging from an unbalanced 15 count to a balanced 19 count, shut-out or encouraging, but 18-19 balanced is the standard approach. That's what all the books say. What is the root cause of the disagreement between Hans and myself? Hans will freely rebid NT with a singleton (or void) in partner's suit – I will not. The *only* case where I have to resort to this is a 1444 hand (singleton ♠); i.e 1♣ - 1♠ - 1NT. Hans' style has two major drawbacks – (1) his NT rebids are often not balanced and (2) they are often out-of-range.

Respond to Partner's Opening if Possible.

If you have 6 or more points and your partner opens a suit at the 1 level, then you should respond. As I stated in news-sheet 20, a 1NT response (6-9) may have to be a bit distorted in shape if opener's bid is a major. These two hands come from Friday.

West6	South19
♠ 3	♠ 85
♥ 109872	♥ 98432
♦ AK985	♦ AJ107
♣ 74	♣ Q6

In both cases, partner opened 1♠. You have insufficient values for a two level bid, so you have to fall back on 1NT. However, what actually happened with both hands was that RHO overcalled 2♣. What luck! Normally an overcall makes life difficult, playing negative doubles it often makes it easier. Simply double 2♣ (negative). This guarantees 4♥'s (could be 5 with a weak hand – as in these cases).

Some play that it also shows ♦'s. Either way, the negative double makes life easy with these hands. What actually happened? Both these hands passed. With 7 points, you really should say something, and negative doubles enable you to do this perfectly. Guess that these two guys do not play negative doubles the normal way? Incidentally, playing negative doubles, if you pass and then bid 2♥ over partner's 'likely' re-opening double then this shows 5♥'s but less than 6 points – i.e. insufficient values for an initial negative double. Of course, every partnership plays negative doubles differently; I am just stating what is standard. It's best to play standard with an unfamiliar partner?

Leading Against NT

I encountered a couple of really poor opening leads last Monday, so a few tips: -

AKxxx Lead 4th best. Especially if you have no other possible entry. Do not lead the ace to 'have a look at dummy'. This hand led the ace against us in 2NT redoubled – the only lead to let the contract make. His partner obtained the lead 3 times subsequently but there was no way for this hand to regain the lead as his partner had just two of this suit. Once the ace was led, it was too late. It did not matter if he continued with the king or not. If partner has xx, you have turned 4 tricks into 2. If partner has Qx, you have turned 5 tricks into 2. Simply banging out aces and kings is losing Bridge. Set things up, especially against NT (in a suit contract, of course, lead the ace from this holding).

J109x Lead the jack. Do not lead 4th best when you have a sequence or near sequence.

J108x Leading x from J109x gave declarer a trick with the 8 on Monday.

Now what do you lead if partner has bid a suit. Usually his suit – but which card? There are a few players in the club who say to always lead your highest card – this is incorrect.

Kxx, Kxxx etc Lead the smallest x. You will be donating a trick to a declarer with Qxx if you lead the K.

Axx, Qxx, Jxx etc Lead small from an honour, so the smallest x again. If you have no outside entry, then J from Jxx is OK.

Ax, Kx, Qx, Jx, Top from a doubleton. Otherwise you may block the suit and a lone honour will not. Usually trap declarer's honour.

And if partner has not bid? – often 4th best from longest and strongest: -

KQ432 Lead the three.

KQ1032 Lead the K, top from a sequence or near sequence.