

Last week's winners: Monday 21/7/03

Friday 25/7/03

1st Bob/Joe 62%
 2nd Chuck/Terry 60%

1st Chuck/Terry 58 VP's
 2nd John G/John 48 VP's

Well Excuse Me for Bidding My Hand!Board 17 from Friday 18th

West	East	West (Bill)	North	East (Ian)	South
♠ AK52	♠ 103	1♦	1♥	♦2	pass
♥ K42	♥ 103	2♠	pass	pass !	pass
♦ KQ843	♦ A752				
♣ K	♣ QJ873				

I was not at the table, but apparently a conversation along the following lines ensued: -

West: How can you pass my 2♠ bid?
 East: I have already said I have a weak hand. So why bid on?
 West: I was looking for game.
 East: Stick to the system, I have a weak hand.
 West: Well excuse me for bidding my hand.

So, who was correct? I was asked to comment. The following is my view, whatever I say I know that a certain somebody will disagree with me, but here goes: -

East's bid showed about 6-9 points and ♦ support. West's subsequent 2♠ bid shows a good ♠ suit and is a try for game opposite what East has already said. It invites East to investigate/bid game if he is maximum for his bidding so far. I fully agree with West's bids. East's hand is perhaps borderline as to go to game or not. Many would, others would not; that is not the issue here. If East believes that game is impossible, simply bid 3♦. Do not pass with the mistaken impression that West has made a silly bid. The only silly bid was East's pass.

What actually happened? ♣A and ♥A were with North (as expected). South had no entry and 5♦ would have made. 3♦ was bid (making +3) at the other table. 2♠ went down.

Transfers over 2NT?

Board 15 from Friday 25th

Transfers over 1NT are pretty universal these days, with 2♠ either being used as a transfer to ♣'s or a transfer to ♣/♦'s. But what if partner opens 2NT (either directly or via 2♣)? Opener has shown a big hand, 20+, there is no need for a weak transfer to a minor. With a weak hand and a long minor, either pass 2NT or chance 3NT. There are few other options as 3♣ is Stayman, 3♦ is a transfer to ♥'s and 3♠ is needed for a special case as mentioned below. Anyway, even if you could transfer into 4♣/♦, would that be a good contract? Not too often.

East15	Hand A	East15 is from Friday. Partner opened 2NT (20-22), what is your bid? You really <i>must</i> play transfers in this situation.
♠ 76532	♠ K7652	You simply want to play in 3♠. If you do not play transfers
♥ 5	♥ A4	and simply bid 3♠, then how does partner know if you have
♦ J842	♦ J842	five ♠'s and garbage or a game going hand like Hand A?
♣ 843	♣ 43	Simple. Transfer. With East15, bid 3♥ and pass partner's reply.

With Hand A, transfer and then bid 3NT, showing 5 ♠'s and offering partner the choice between 4♠ and 3NT. Transfers are good over 1NT, with less bidding space they (or some similar system like Baron/Flint) are *imperative* over 2NT.

So, what happened? East15 bid 3♠ (meaning it as natural) and the partnership got too high. Now then, what should 3♠ mean after a 2NT opener? Perhaps for the more advanced player, but when playing transfers the best use for the bid is that it shows game going values with 5 ♠'s and 4 ♥'s. The reason is that there is insufficient room to transfer and bid ♥'s below 3NT. There is no problem with the other major two-suiter, with 5 ♥'s and 4 ♠'s you can transfer (3♦) and then bid 3♠, forcing.

Negative Doubles at the Two Level?

Board 19 from Friday 25th

Negative doubles are played slightly differently by just about every partnership. This hand came up on Friday and my and Chuck's treatment of negative doubles are exactly the same.

North19	I held this hand on Friday and my partner (Chuck) opened 1♦. RHO bid 2♣, what do you do? First of all, one very important point to clear up.
♠ AK64	How strong does a negative double at the two level need to be? With
♥ 10542	no interference, this hand is not strong enough for a two level bid, but
♦ 8763	after RHO's bid has pushed us there, a negative double is perfectly OK
♣ 9	with this hand. Why? Because the negative double <i>does not</i> promise the

same values as a two level bid, it only promises values to compete at this level in opener's suit or a suit shown by the negative double. This hand is a perfect example, you are quite happy if partner's rebid is 2♦, 2♥, or 2♠. Your negative double does *not* promise sufficient values for partner to rebid 2NT on a flat 12-14.

Push 'em Up and Double?!

Board 14 from Friday 25th , Love all.

West14	West	North	East	South
♠ K7	-	-	pass	1 ♠
♥ AKJ754	2 ♥	2 ♠	pass	pass
♦ Q7	3 ♥	3 ♠	pass	pass
♣ K93	?			

N-S were trying to play in just 2 ♠ , you were happy with 3 ♥ but it pushed them up to the three level. What now? 4 ♥ is obviously absurd, but double? They are one level above their comfort zone. Basically, this is one of those situations where the type of scoring is very important. Your expectation is that 3 ♠ will be one down, but doubling at IMPs (teams) is a very bad move. If they go one down, then you gain 100 instead of 50, not important at IMPs. But if they make then they score 530, very significant. At pairs double is perfectly sound, but not at teams.

What happened? 3 ♠ made for the biggest swing of the match.

Play The Big One

Board 10 from Friday 18th

North 10	West	North (me)	East	South (Chuck)
♠ KJ2	-	-	pass	pass
♥ K83	1 ♠	1NT (1)	2 ♠	3 ♥ (2)
♦ A	pass	4 ♥	all pass	
♣ AJ7532				

I held this hand playing with Chuck. First of all, the bidding. I chose 1NT at (1) because I considered it to be the best bid. Unlike 1NT openers, a 1NT overcall is allowed (and often best) on hands like this (but only if the singleton is a minor suit). Chuck's 3 ♥ (2) was forcing (we play Lebensohl here) and so I had no problem bidding game. Fine, now onto the play: -

Chuck won the opening lead in hand and played a small ♥ towards this dummy (me). West paused for a while and Chuck said 'play the big one'. West played the ♥ A and I obediently played the ♥ K from dummy. A few moments later Chuck woke up and asked 'what happened to my trump king'? I replied that he played it under West's ♥ A. Now apparently Chuck was talking to West when he said to 'play the big one' (suggesting that he play the ace). Opponents, of course, subsequently made the ♥ Q. Chuck was not amused. Everybody else at the table (Bill, Ian and myself) thought it hilarious. What was the final outcome? Chuck made 11 tricks and only 10 were made at the other table! The smile came back onto Chuck's face.

And the moral? I guess don't tell the opponents what to play when your partner is a dummy like me?

Redouble ! of 1NT

Board 14 from Fri 18th

- North 14 I held this hand on Friday. Partner opened 1♦, RHO overcalled 1NT (15-17). What do you bid? Nine points, partner has opened in 2nd seat,
- ♠ A732 this particular partner (Chuck) opens soundly, so we have the balance
 - ♥ 532 of the points. Thus my favourite bid, double! This is penalties.
 - ♦ J52 LHO redoubled and all passed. What did the redouble mean?
 - ♣ A92
- 1♦ 1NT dbl redbl? all pass

Actually, the 1NT overcaller should be able to work this out without prior agreement. Assume 1♦ is 12+ points and doubler is 9+ points, overcaller himself had 16 points, that leaves max 3 points for partner. The redouble can only be SOS, looking for a 4-4 fit. My double states that our side have the majority of the points. Just as an aside, what do you lead against 1NT redoubled? Answer below.

That sequence is easy, the following is not quite so simple: -

1NT dbl redbl?

In the 1st sequence, the 1NT bidder knows that his side is outgunned and that redouble can only be for SOS. In the 2nd sequence it is not clear. Does the 1NT bidder's partner have a big hand and looking for a huge score, or is it also SOS? This one you cannot work out and you have to agree it with your partner. Many play redouble as SOS also in this 2nd sequence. I am not so convinced when playing a strong NT (I prefer to stick it to 'em when they interfere with our strong NT) Another system that is popular is the a pass by responder forces opener to double; responder then passes with a good hand or else runs. It's up to you. And what did you lead against 1NT redoubled? ♦2 is the answer, low from an honour and partner's suit must be best.

Do You Open ?

Board 8 from Friday 18th

- North 8 2nd in hand, nobody vul, teams scoring, do you open? 12 points, no jacks so yes? I did not. First, it does not comply with the rule of 20. Secondly, it is totally flat (so deduct one point). Thirdly, the only 4 card suit contains no honour. This hand is not an opener in my book. Much to my surprise, Chuck said that he would open it. Hans, of course, sided against me and said that he also would open. Would you? And what happened? Passed out. They opened at the other table, partner had an 8 count and 1NT went one down.
- Hand B When I got home, I did a quick check to find a similar hand. This Hand B is from a recent Max Hardy book. Pretty similar, in fact I prefer Hand B as it has points in the long suit and better intermediates. Anyway, Max says to pass.
- ♠ QJ9 Basically, I think that there are two ways of looking at it. Either use the
 - ♥ K985 rule of 20 or else deduct 1 point for 4333 type shape and open on 12+.
 - ♦ J43 Both hands fail both tests
 - ♣ KQ9

A 1NT Opener?

Board 5 from Monday 14th :-

North 5	South 5	Two North's opened the hand with 1♠ and reached the sensible 2♠ contract. The other two North's elected to open a strong NT. Many experts (including Zia Mahmood!, remember that 1NT doubled minus seven from news sheet 12?) would open 1NT with this North. I personally prefer 1♠ with a good suit like this, but it is a personal preference.
♠ AKJ63	♠ Q75	
♥ A2	♥ 98543	
♦ J84	♦ K52	
♣ A64	♣ QJ	

What happened? At one table, south transferred and passed the 2♥ reply. Correct in my view, this is a poor 8 count and not worth a try for game. 2♠ cannot be reached after a 1NT opening. And at the other table? N-S lucked out. North again opened 1NT but this time East overcalled 2♦. South doubled and 2♦ doubled minus two was a top for N-S.

So what was this double of 2♦? South meant is as saying that he would have bid 2♦ himself (so still a transfer). North took it as penalties. Who was correct? You can play it however you like. Both approaches are common, you simply have to agree with partner! I personally prefer all doubles as penalties (especially when playing a strong NT) and I play Lebensohl. I like to play all systems (Stayman and transfers) off when there is *any* interference over my partner's 1NT, but it's up to you to decide with your partner.

Can a ♠ Game be reached?

Board 5 (modified) from Monday 14th :-

Same board, but with a slightly stronger South hand. Suppose North again opens 1NT, can 4♠ be reached with no interference?

Noprth5	South5	North	South	South (1) is an invitation to game North's normal options are pass, 3NT or 4♥. I suggest another possible bid - 3♠ (2). This accepts the game invitation but also says that North has 5 decent ♠'s. South can then either bid 4♠ or 3NT.
♠ AKJ63	♠ Q75	1NT	2♦	
♥ A2	♥ 98543	2♥	2NT (1)	
♦ J84	♦ A52	3♠ (2)	4♠	
♣ A64	♣ QJ	pass		

An Opening Pre-empt?

Board 17 from Mon 25th

East 17 I held this hand on Monday, non-vul and in 2nd seat. What do you open?
I opened 1♠ and there was considerable debate about the
♠ AKQ10943 opening bid after the hand. Chuck said that he would open 3♠.
♥ 1054 I said that the hand was far too good, Guy agreed with me.
♦ J Hans at first sided with Chuck of course, but upon reflection said that
♣ 109 1♠ was OK because I had ♥ 'support'. So, who's right?

First of all, Hans. He said 1♠ is only OK because of the ♥ suit. He added that if the ♥ holding was switched with a minor suit holding then he would open 3♠. I see no difference, the hand is probably going to be played in ♠'s and whether your 3 card suit is ♥'s or a minor hardly matters.

Next, a 3♠ opening? Partner has not passed. You have a good hand, with your fair share of the points and an excellent spade suit. Who are you pre-empting? LHO or partner? This hand is (in my and Guy's view) far too good for 3♠. If the ♠A or ♠K were replaced by a small ♠, then I would open 3♠. The only bid other than 1♠ worth considering is 4♠ and I think that it is an equally good bid.

Position at the table is very important for pre-empts, and my opinion of this hand in the four positions is:

1st seat 1♠ or 4♠. I slightly prefer 4♠ here as it is 2-1 that it is the opponents who have the points.
2nd seat 1♠ or 4♠. Both are fine by me.
3rd seat 4♠. Only LHO left and partner has passed. Pre-empt to the hilt.
4th seat There is no such thing as a pre-empt in 4th seat. Opening 2 or 3 bids are bid with an expectation of making if partner has his fair share of points. Bid 2♠. 3♠ is also a very reasonable alternative, especially if you play strong two's or strong two's in 4th seat. You expect partner to have 9-11 points and 2♠ or 3♠ should make your way.

I would *never* open this hand 3♠ (except maybe in 4th seat). Either 1♠ or 4♠.

Pre-empt in 4th seat?

Hand C Obviously you do not need to pre-empt in 4th seat as you can pass the hand out. An opening 2♥/♠ can be played how you wish. Some play this as a traditional strong bid (8 playing tricks). Another option for 2♠ would be something like Hand C. 9-12 points, so 3 or so points more than a traditional weak two. Be wary of opening 2♥ in 4th seat. If you don't have a good hand or a good ♠ holding opponents may steal the contract in ♠'s.

♠ KQ9874
♥ KQ4
♦ 8
♣ J74