

Last week's winners: Monday 29/9/03

Friday 3/10/03

1 st	Dave/Gerry	60%	1 st	Dave/John G	60%
2 nd	Clive/Ken	58%	2 nd	Bob/Ken	57%

Good show Dave (& Gerry & John), goes to show that Acol and the weak NT do work. Things are looking up, 4 full tables on Friday, peak season's on it's way.

I got an interesting comment/compliment from Jim concerning my article on doubles in news-sheet 44. He said that at first reading it seemed a bit overwhelming, but upon a re-read it was excellent, clear and informative - thanks Jim. Martin also said that he liked the format and bidding quizzes. Keep the compliments coming and I'll keep on writing. I made a note this week, it takes about 6 hours to produce this news sheet, and that does not include the two hours or so for scoring the two sessions. Nice to know that the majority appreciate it. And who knows, in a year or ten maybe some of what I say may sink in? The 4-4 fit for example? Read on.

Bidding Quiz

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A partner opens 3♠ in 1 st seat. What is your bid? ...Jeff was the only one to get this right at the table.
♠ 102	♠ AQ97	
♥ AKQ1063	♥ 108	Suppose that you open Hand B with 1♣ and partner replies 1♥, what is your rebid? ...but Jeff got this one wrong!
♦ AKJ	♦ AK10	
♣ AK	♣ A932	
Hand C	Hand D	So, nobody's right all the time, are they? Excuse me, something's stuck in my throat.
♠ Q983	♠ Q964	With hand C partner opens 1NT, what do you bid?
♥ Q10764	♥ Q9853	
♦ 85	♦ 7	With hand D partner opens 1NT, what do you bid?
♣ 63	♣ 862	
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E LHO deals and opens 1♣. This is passed round to you, what do you do?
♠ K54	♠ 73	
♥ AQJ	♥ Q5	If you play a weak NT would you open Hand F with 1NT or 1♦? Suppose that you open 1♦ and partner replies 1NT. What now? Pass or 2♣?
♦ 932	♦ KQJ83	
♣ 10876	♣ AJ73	
Hand G	Hand H	With Hand G partner opens 1♠. What is your response?
♠ 10753	♠ J1086	With Hand H partner opens 1♣. Do you pass or try 1♥?
♥ KQ4	♥ K7432	Suppose you pass, LHO doubles (take out) and this is passed round to you, what now?
♦ J94	♦ 764	
♣ A75	♣ 5	

An Interesting Hand All Round

Board 17 from Friday 3rd

I had no idea what title to put for this hand as there were a number of candidates: - Missing a 4-4 major fit, responding with sub-minimal values, balancing over 1♣ in 4th seat, bidding garbage Stayman, opening 1NT with a suitable hand, denying a 4 card major, bid NT or a penalty pass? It's all here on this one deal!

What's more, each one of the four tables produced a bidding sequence that I did not like; and I have comments on the bidding of each of the four hands – no bad eh?

Dealer: ♠ J1086
 North ♥ K7432
 Love all ♦ 764
 ♣ 5

♠ 32	N	♠ K54
♥ 965	W E	♥ AQJ
♦ QJ85	S	♦ 932
♣ KQJ4		♣ 10876
	♠ AQ97	
	♥ 108	
	♦ AK10	
	♣ A932	

Table A:

West	North (H)	East	South (B)
-	pass	pass	1♣ (1)
pass	1♥ (2)	pass	2NT (3)
all pass			

Table B:

West	North	East (E)	South
-	pass	pass	1♣ (4)
pass	pass	dbl (5)	pass
pass (6)	1♥ (7)	all pass	

Table C:

West	North	East	South
-	pass	pass	1NT (8)
pass	pass (9)	pass	1NT (10)pass

Table D:

West	North	East	South
-	pass	pass	1♣
pass	pass	dbl (5)	pass
	pass	pass	

Just 4 tables on Friday, and 4 different sequences. Let's start with table A. They were playing a strong NT but South elected not to open 1NT, seems like an ideal top-of-the-range 1NT to me. I suspect that the reason that South opened 1♣ was because of the weak ♥'s, I have repeatedly said not to worry about a weak doubleton when opening 1NT – you cannot recover by rebidding NT as that will always show an incorrect point range. Anyway, he opened 1♣ at (1). His partner (Alex) chose to reply 1♥ at (2) on this 4 count. Some people may prefer to pass but I could not stomach having partner play in 1♣. I totally agree with Alex's choice. The 2NT bid at (3) is silly on two counts – the bid shows 18-19 points when playing a strong NT and this hand is not good enough, also the bid denies a 4 card major. 1♠ is the bid (if you had forgotten to open 1NT). 1♠ shows anything from 12-18 points and is not forcing. It is, however, rarely passed (although it would have been, with alacrity, on this occasion). This South hand is not good enough for a forcing 2♠ (say 19-20 pts) rebid.

At table B they were playing a weak NT and South opened 1♣ at (4), (I would open 1♠ playing Acol). North passed (with which many – but not me – would agree). East then doubled in the pass out seat. Correct? Think about it. Partner (West) obviously has some points, but he could take no action over 1♣. He did not overcall and so probably does not have a 5 card ♦, ♥ or ♠ suit. He did not double, he probably has ♣'s. Where are you going if you double? You have ♣'s, partner has ♣'s. Pass and let them stew! 1NT (10-13 pts in the pass out seat) is an alternative but I prefer pass. Anyway, East made a poor double (5) and West passed (6), a good conversion into penalties. North, of course, cannot stand 1♣ doubled and pulled to 1♥ at (7). Obviously better than passing, but the correct bid is re-double. This cannot be business (you would have bid on the first round) and so it asks partner to pull it. 1♠ is then easily reached.

And the bidding at the third table was by no means perfect. The strong NT at (8) is obvious but the North hand is unsuitable for NT. Bid Stayman 2♣ at (9) (pass a 2♥ or 2♠ response and convert 2♦ to 2♥), this is preferable to passing or transferring.

Table D was similar to table B and 1NT at (10) is reasonable, although I prefer the pass chosen by Bob at table B. But then double (or passing and thus converting a double into penalties) is my favourite bid.

So, the 4-4 major suit ♠ fit was missed at every table! Looks like I have to keep on writing and spreading the word. And how should the bidding have gone?

I suggest :-

	South	North	South	North
Playing a strong NT	1NT	- 2♣	- 2♠	- pass
Playing a weak NT (5 card major)	1♣	- 1♥	- 1♠	- pass
Playing Acol	1♠	- pass		

Playing Acol. North may choose to raise the opening 1♠ to 2♠; then a satisfactory 3♠ is reached. In these last two sequences, if East balances over 1♠ then North can raise to 2♠. Having already passed the 1♠ bid, this shows (sub)minimal values. I can't tell you how 1♠ or 2♠ fared (nobody was in it), but it is clearly an excellent contract for N-S, looks like 9 tricks to me.

Raising Partner's Major

Board 13 from Friday 3rd

West	East (G)	West	North	East	South
♠ AKQ82	♠ 10753	1♠	pass	3♠	pass
♥ A52	♥ KQ4	4♠	pass	pass	pass
♦ 753	♦ J94				
♣ Q4	♣ A75				

This was the auction at the table where I was kibitzing. 4♠ was obviously one down. 4♠ was reached at another table and just one pair (Ian/Tomas) managed to play in a sensible 2♠. What went wrong here? Should West have declined the invitation or was the 3♠ bid overboard? West has a good hand and should accept; it was East's 3♠ that was too optimistic. 3♠ shows a good 10 - bad 12 pts; this is a miserable 10 pts and should also deduct a point for the 4333 shape (no ruffing values or suit to set up). 2♠ is quite adequate with this East hand. West should pass 2♠, not enough for a try.

Discards in Defence

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.

A Silly NT contract

Board 17 from Monday 29th, love all

Dealer: ♠ J98
North ♥ 64
Love all ♦ A92
♣ K10965

♠ AK62	N	♠ Q1054
♥ 108732	W E	♥ AKJ9
♦ 74	S	♦ 1065
♣ Q8		♣ 42
	♠ 73	
	♥ Q5	
	♦ KQJ83	
	♣ AJ73	

Table A:

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

Table B:

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

First of all, the bidding. I was North at table A and passed my partner's weak NT. But what about that South hand? Is a weak NT at (1) correct? No. With two weak doubletons and 11 points concentrated in two suits 1♦ is the correct opening.

The bidding at Table B was that at three other tables. 1♦ is correct whether you play a weak NT or a strong NT. The 1NT response at (2) is also correct, showing 6-10 points and no 4 card major. Playing a weak NT then 2♣ is preferable to 1NT. But what about South's pass at (3)? This is wrong, partner has denied any 4 card major and you have two doubletons there; one or both of these suits could be wide open. Also, since partner has no 4 card major, he *must* have at least one 4 card minor and you have a fit. Rebid 2♣.

And now onto the play in 1NT. Opponents are not stretched to find the ♥ lead and E-W wrap up the first 5 ♥ tricks. But what does East discard on the 5th ♥? He obviously wants a ♠ led and at our table he discarded a ♠. Presumably they do not play Lavinthal; they then proceeded to make just 3 more ♠ tricks. Playing Lavinthal you discard either a ♣ or a ♦, and a high card would ask for ♠'s. In this case the ♦10 is very clear. As virtually the whole room was in this silly contract this defence of throwing a ♠ scored a near bottom. Do not throw good cards away. Play Lavinthal.

Only Gerry/Dave managed to bid this hand sensibly, they reached the excellent 3♣ contract. Just goes to show, bid sensibly and you win competitions. Nine tricks are easy in ♣'s, quite how they made 11 is a mystery to me. E-W could, of course, have interfered somewhere (they have 9 tricks in either major). But they did not so that's another story.

Preference

Board 18 from Monday 29th

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ 42	♠ AK8753	-	-	pass	1NT (1)
♥ KQJ542	♥ 97	2♣ (2)	2♥ (3)	3♣	3♠ (4)
♦ J9642	♦ AQ	pass	4♦ (5)	pass	pass (6)
♣ -	♣ 1097	pass	pass	pass	

- (1) Weak, 12-14 balanced? Obviously a candidate for the worst opening bid of the year. No surprise that it is the same player who opened 1NT on the previous hand. Two small ♠'s or six to the AK, it appears to make no difference.
- (2) Natural (3) Natural
- (4) Suddenly noticing that he has a good ♠ suit?
- (5) Obviously not expecting a 6 card ♠ suit opposite and offering partner a choice of the red suits.
- (6) When you have equal length in partner's two suits, always put him back into his first bid suit. This is called simple preference and simply says that you do not prefer the 2nd suit. 3♥ or 4♥ are excellent contracts, 4♦ goes three or four off. There is an enormous difference between having 8 trumps and only 7 (5 tricks in this case!!). South should bid 4♥, the fact that the ♦'s are honours is irrelevant; length is the important thing, always give preference with equal length.

Raising Partner's Pre-empt

Board 14 from Monday 29th

West (A)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ 102	♠ AQJ9876	-	-	3♠ (1)	pass
♥ AKQ1063	♥ 8	5♠ (2)	pass	pass (3)	pass
♦ AKJ	♦ 9874				
♣ AK	♣ Q				

- (1) A lovely hand for a pre-empt.
- (2) This was meant to be forcing
- (3) East assumed that 5♠ was increasing the pre-empt.

So then, what does 5♠ at (2) mean? This is not in the text books! West maintained that it was a grand slam force, requesting East to bid 7♠ with 2 of the top 3 honours. This is incorrect, 5NT is the grand slam force and, in any case, a 7 card suit with just two of the top 3 honours is insufficient opposite a small doubleton. The only sensible use that I can think of for the 5♠ bid is pre-emptive. I guess that you could play it as invitational to 6♠, 5 of a major is usually invitational to 6 in normal auctions. Without prior agreement, don't bid it over a pre-empt! Anyway, 6♠ seems an obvious bid to me with this West hand. You could try RKCB (a 5♠ response would show ♠ AKQ) but East would probably open 4♠ or 1♠ with ♠ AKQxxxx. Of course East could hold just ♠ QJxxxxx in which case RKCB is a must in order to avoid 6♠.

There was some discussion of the bidding after the hand was over. One player suggested that West should bid 6NT. I disagree, if East does not have ♠ A then there may be no entry to the ♠'s. RKCB or 6♠ are the only sensible bids with the West cards. The board was played 5 times on Monday and only Jim/Jeff reached 6♠ (everybody else was in game). Good stuff Jeff (he bid Blackwood and was looking for the grand!).

Garbage Stayman

Board 2 from Monday 29th

West (C)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ Q983	♠ KJ1072	-	-	1NT	pass
♥ Q10764	♥ A3	2♣ (2)	pass	2♠	pass
♦ 85	♦ AK3	pass	pass		
♣ 63	♣ J95				

If you open 1♠ with the East Hand then you will probably end up in 2♠ or 3♠ (perhaps 1♠ - 2♠ - 3♠ - pass), which is fine. A strong 1NT is perhaps a better opening and this was the auction at our table. I note that at one table a contract of 2♥ by East was reached, obviously via a transfer. With these weak 5-4 or 4-5 major hands, do not transfer but look for a fit via Stayman. Nine tricks were there in ♠'s and 2♥ went one down.

And a similar hand: -

Board 1 from Monday 29th

North (D)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ Q964	♠ KJ109	pass	pass	pass	1NT
♥ Q9853	♥ 72	pass	2♣ (2)	pass	2♠
♦ 7	♦ AK92	pass	pass		
♣ 862	♣ AQ7				

This was the bidding at our table. Jeff opened a strong NT and his partner (Jim) correctly bid Stayman rather than transferring. Two pairs played in 2♥ after transferring. The 4-4 fit usually produces an extra trick, 2♥ made exactly and 2♠ scored plus one.

Note that if responder does not have a 4 or 5 card major then he will reply 2♦ to Stayman. In that case, responder must then bid his 5 card suit. Thus the sequences: -

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥ and 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♠ are weak and opener must pass.

The disadvantage of using Stayman rather than transferring is that in these latter two sequences when opener has no 4 card major then the contract is played by the weaker hand. A small price to pay for not missing the 4-4 or better fit. And another disadvantage if you transfer, partner may super-accept which may be sad if you have a weaker hand.

The bottom line. Don't listen to people who tell you to transfer with these hand types. Locating a possible 4-4 or better fit is all important. Playing in a 5-2 or 5-3 fit when there is a 4-4 or 5-4 fit is just silly.

Bidding Quiz Solutions

Hand A: Bid 4NT only if you play RKCB. Otherwise 6♠.

Hand B: If you open 1♣ then your rebid is 1♠. Do not deny a 4 card major.

Hands C&D: Bid 2♣ Stayman. Do not transfer when you have both majors.

Hand E: Pass. This is better than double or 1NT. 1♣ will be a sorry contract.

Hand F: The hand is unsuitable for a NT opening. Open 1♦ and rebid 2♣ over 1NT

Hand G: 2♠. Not good enough for 3♠.

Hand H: I would not pass, but bid 1♥. If you do pass and LHO's double is passed round to you, then re-double. This is SOS.