

Last week's winners: Monday 22/12/03

Friday 26/12/03

1st Rolf/Willy 70%
 2nd Dave/Norman 68%

1st Dave/Norman 65%
 2nd Chuck/Terry 57%

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

Hand A

Hand B

What do you open with Hand A?

♠ KQ984

♠ AKQJ8753

♥ AK8743

♥ K107

What do you open with Hand B?

♦ K

♦ 10

♣ 2

♣ 9

What do you open with Hand C?

Hand C

Hand D

♠ AKQ985

♠ AKQ10652

What do you open with Hand D?

♥ A4

♥ AQJ106

♦ KQJ104

♦ -

♣ -

♣ 2

You may recognise Hand E, it's the hand E from last week. Hans and Chuck both say that it is not good enough for a 2♣ opener, so this week's question(s) is - You open 1♦, what is your rebid after partner responds

Hand E

Hand F

(a) 1♥, (b) 1♠, (c) 1NT, (d) 2♣, (e) 2♦?

♠ A8

♠ AKQJ6

♥ AJ

♥ AKQ53

♦ AQJ108753

♦ KQ

♣ K

♣ 3

With Hand F RHO opens 1♦, what do you bid?

Hand G

Hand H

With hand G you open 1♠, LHO overcalls 2♦ and partner doubles (promising 4♥'s and at least values to compete to 2♥). What is your bid?

♠ AJ752

♠ 92

♥ AQ74

♥ AJ987

♦ Q9

♦ AJ2

♣ Q4

♣ 862

With Hand H you are playing Strong jump overcalls. LHO opens 1♥ and partner bids 3♣ (strong), what do you do?

Is it Forcing?

There is no opposition bidding: -

Sequence J: 1♥ - 2♦ - 2♠

Is 2♠ passable, forcing or game forcing?

Sequence K: 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♠

Is 2♠ passable, forcing or game forcing?

For sequence L you are playing strong twos: -

Sequence L: 2♠ - 2NT - 3♦

2NT is a negative, is 3♦ forcing?

The 2♣ opening.

Strong and artificial. There are two general hand types that warrant a strong 2♣ opening:

- (a) a balanced hand with 23+ points (many play 22+ these days).
- (b) a strong hand that is within one trick of game in it's own hand.

Type (a) is obvious, but let's look at what qualifies for type (b) and what does not: -

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C	Hand D	Hand E
♠ KQ984	♠ AKQJ8753	♠ AKQ985	♠ AKQ10652	♠ A8
♥ AK8743	♥ K107	♥ A4	♥ AQJ106	♥ AJ
♦ K	♦ 10	♦ KQJ104	♦ -	♦ AQJ108753
♣ 2	♣ 9	♣ -	♣ 2	♣ K

Hand A is West Board 12 from last week. Nice, but it only has about 6 or 7 playing tricks. Open 1♥ and rebid 2♠. Even if you play strong twos (or Benjamin) the hand is only worth a 1♥ opening in my opinion. We cover this hand in detail later.

Hand B is East Board 7 from last week; it has 8 playing tricks + ♥K, so just short of the playing strength for a 2♣ opener. However, 2♣ should not be considered with this type of hand as you really need more in the way of high card strength for a 2♣ opener; the correct opening with this hand is 4♠ - even if you play strong twos.

Hand C has 11 playing tricks, a clear 2♣ opener. We cover this hand in detail later.

Hand D is from an American magazine, one expert opened 1♠. When we come to discuss Hand A later, you will see that it is sometimes unwise to open 2♣ with two suited hands, this is especially true if the longer suit is lower ranking than the other long suit (as in Hand A). This Hand D, however, is so powerful that you simply have to open 2♣; and the fact that the suits are 'in the correct order for easy bidding' make it a straightforward 2♣ opener. Hans and Chuck would both bid 2♣.

Hand E is last week's Hand E; it has 9 tricks plus the ♣K and ♥J, so well worth a 2♣ opening in my opinion. Hans said not so, and would open 1♦; Chuck agreed. I don't believe Chuck - he partnered me last week when I opened 2♣ and rebid 3♦ - he settled for 3NT with ♦K and ♣A opposite. If the 2♣ (followed by 3♦) promises 10 tricks then he would obviously have bid slam? I think that it's very difficult to 'catch up' sensibly if you open just 1♦ (see answer to question E in the Bidding quiz solutions). Joe agrees with me and would open 2♣.

And just compare Hands A and E. Anybody (Hans) who says that Hand A is worth a 2♣ opening but Hand E does not most certainly 'does not play the same system as me'. I've said it before - I have no idea what system Hans plays. And if an American expert opens hand D with just 1♠ then I hate to think what they would say about opening Hand A with 2♣.

Incidentally, have you agreed what a double means when RHO overcalls partner's 2♣ opening? I think it's probably best (and simplest) to play it as penalties (with pass as the usual negative/relay or whatever you play). This comes up later.

And what does one do if you have a genuine 2♣ rockcrusher but RHO opens in front of you? We have an example later.

Too High

Board 14 from Friday 26th, love all.

N-S got too high here, can you spot the poor bid?

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ AJ752	♠ 104	-	-	pass	pass
♥ AQ74	♥ J10532	pass	1♠	2♦	dbl (1)
♦ Q9	♦ J63	pass	3♥ (2)	pass	4♥
♣ Q4	♣ A85	pass	pass	pass	

(1) Negative, promising 4 ♥'s

(2) game invitational

4♥ went two off, anyone to blame? Let's see. South's double at (1) promises just 4 ♥'s and a 2♥ bid at (1) would show 5 ♥'s but would show a far better hand. It would normally be forcing, but not in this instance as South is a passed hand. Anyway, a negative double is the correct bid (showing values to compete to 2♥). And what can we say about North's 3♥ bid? Optimistic is perhaps an understatement. 3♥ here should be about 15-17 points. This is a *very* poor 15. The two Qx's are bad, it has poor shape and no intermediates. The correct bid is a simple 2♥. This North really should know better – but no names.

A Play Problem – for the more advanced player

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ 93	♠ AKJ4	-	-	pass	1♣
♥ A82	♥ Q764	pass	1♦	pass	1♥ (1)
♦ K109874	♦ Q	pass	3♦	pass	3NT
♣ K10	♣ AQ62	pass	pass	pass	

First of all, the bidding. With this sort of South hand it really helps if you are playing a form of the multi 2♦ which incorporates the 4441 type shapes – they are notoriously difficult to bid with standard methods. The 'problem' is that 1♥ at (1) is not forcing, but then 2♥ (forcing) does not look too attractive with this ropery ♥ suit. Anyway, it all worked out fine and this is about the play of the hand, not the bidding: -

West leads the ♠5, you play the ♠9 from dummy, East plays the ♠10 and your ♠J wins. It is a team's competition (so overtricks are relatively unimportant – the important thing is to ensure the contract). How do you continue?

Answer at the end of this news sheet.

Double with 6 top 'trumps'?

Board 25 from Monday 19th, E-W vul

When the opponents have obviously had a bidding disaster, it may be best not to double. Who knows, maybe they can escape after the double? I have mentioned this a couple of times before, if they are in a silly contract, 'let it be' unless you are sure that they have no escape.

The commentary for the meaning of the bids is what they should mean: -

Dealer:	♠ K754	West	North	East	South
North	♥ A52				
E-W vul	♦ AK9	-	1NT	pass	2♥ (1)
	♣ Q76	pass (2)	2♠ (3)	pass	2NT (4)
		pass	4♠ (5)	pass	4NT (6)
♠ AQJ1098	N	♠ 32	dbl	pass	pass
♥ 104	W E	♥ KJ73			
♦ J2	S	♦ 754	(1) transfer to ♠'s		
♣ K98		♣ J1054	(3) not good enough to super-accept		
	♠ 6		(4) invitational (8 points and 5 ♠'s)		
	♥ Q986		(5) with 4 'trumps', let's try the ♠ game		
DUMMY	♦ Q10863		(6) oops		
→	♣ A32				

Well then, quite amusing. But to be fair, South is just beginning, but did West do well?

First, let's look at the bidding. At (2) West 'knows' that South has forgotten about transfers and so made a very sensible pass. North's 4♠ bid was music to West's ears, but what should he do after South's 4NT (It was obvious that he had probably forgotten about transfers)? West doubled, joyfully saying that he had loads more doubling cards in his box. Since South had made a non-forcing bid at (4) then this 4NT bid at (6) is obviously (?) to play and everybody knows what's going on anyway.

And how did the play go? East led a ♣, low from Dummy (South) and West won with the ♣K. Now West can play this pretty well double dummy, he knows that North probably has exactly ♠Kxxx, leaving partner (East) with ♠xx. So which ♠ do you lead? A five in six chance of getting it right – but West chose ♠A, followed by another – the only defence to give North a shot at the contract.

Dealer:	♠ -	North won the ♠K and discarded a ♥ from dummy.
North	♥ A52	Five rounds of ♦'s followed and then the two top
E-Wvul	♦ -	♣'s left this end position and East got just one ♥ trick.
	♣ -	Holding onto a ♣ would have been no better for East
		(North would have played on ♥'s before relinquishing
♠ J109	N	the top ♣'s). But if East had had a ♠ left
♥ -	W E	
♦ -	S	The moral? I guess that ♠AQJ1098 is not good
♣ -		enough to double? But seriously, don't double
	♠ -	'silly' contracts if opponents may make 4NT.
	♥ Q98	And if you do double, then don't bang down
	♦ -	top cards (♠AQ) if you have no entry left
	♣ -	– you have a partner.

Worth a (2♣) Game Force?

Board 12 from Monday 22nd, N-S vul

How good is this West Hand? Here are the auctions from two tables last Monday -

West (A)	East	<u>Table A:</u>			
		West	North	East	South
♠ KQ984	♠ 652	1♥ (1)	2♦	dbl (2)	pass
♥ AK8743	♥ J9	2♠ (3)	pass	2NT	pass
♦ K	♦ Q10864	3♥	pass	pass	pass
♣ 2	♣ K83				

<u>Table B:</u>			
West	North	East	South
2♣ (4)	2♦	dbl (5)	pass
2♥ (6)	pass	2NT	pass
3♠	pass	3NT (7)	all pass

3♥ went two down, 3NT failed by 3 tricks. So obviously too high (especially 3NT), but is anybody to blame? The hand is a mis-fit but I cannot see how to sensibly stop below 3♥ (although 2 pairs managed that on Monday – playing in 2♠). All the other 5 pairs went down (three were in game with just two managing to stop in 3♥). Let's look at the bidding of two tables.

At Table A West was a learner and I gave advice. West asked me what to open and I said that the hand was not worth a 2♣ opening, so open 1♥ (with the intention of reversing into 2♠ next go). The double at (2) was penalties (they did not play negative doubles) and 2♠ at (3) was forcing (for one round). The pair managed to play in a good spot.

At Table B West opened a strong 2♣ and East's double at (5) was penalties. 2♥ at (6) is game forcing and we immediately see the problem with opening 2♣; West wants to show both his suits and is at the 3♠ level by the time he has achieved this. East had a difficult decision at (7), West thought that he should bid 4♥. Perhaps, but that was not the cause of getting too high (4♥ was also 3 off), the West hand is not worth a 2♣ opener, lacking both high cards and playing strength.

The bottom line. A 2♣ opener is either a balanced 22(23)+ points or a hand that can make game by itself with virtually nothing from partner. The norm is 9 tricks if a major suit. Also, the hand should contain decent high card strength (15 is pushing it). This West hand is nowhere near the required playing strength – the board was played three times in ♥'s and just 7 tricks were made on every occasion. Since partner is far from bust, obviously this West hand is *way* short of the required 9 tricks.

The ♦K is not worth 3 points. I would not even open this hand with a strong 2♥ (or 2♣ followed by 2♥ if playing Benjamin twos). Open 1♥ and then a reverse into 2♠ is fine.

Traditional Acol

It's not played much these days, but I have a couple of hands from a few weeks back: -

The Strong Jump Overcall

Board 10 from Friday 22nd Nov, both vul.

I rarely mention strong jump overcalls as most people play weak ones these days. However I was playing them here and it should have worked out fine on this deal.

North	South (H)	West	North(me)	East	South
♠ K5	♠ 92	-	-	pass	pass
♥ 10	♥ AJ987	1♥	3♣ (1)	pass	pass (2)
♦ KQ10	♦ AJ2	pass	pass	pass	
♣ AKQ10543	♣ 862				

- (1) A strong jump overcall. 15+ points. When one makes a strong jump overcall in a minor at the three level this shows a strong hand and a good running (or near-running) suit. It generally asks partner to bid 3NT with a stop in the suit opened.
- (2) Words fail me. If you cannot respond with this hand, then read up on strong jump overcalls or convert to the more popular weak type.

Now I rarely play strong jump overcalls but my partner on this occasion (John Gavens) did and I am fairly knowledgeable about the most commonly played systems, especially Acol. I did, however, receive some flack here. One player (the usual suspect - Hans) said that the hand was too strong and that I should first double and then bid ♣'s. This statement shows a fundamental lack of knowledge of *strong* jump overcalls (it is a valid statement if you play intermediate or weak jump overcalls). It really would be nice if people who have no idea about a particular topic would keep quiet. In traditional Acol the jump overcall at the three level is the *strongest* bid available except the cue bid (1♥ - 2♥) which is game forcing. I will mention strong jump overcalls just this once as most players play weak (or intermediate) jump overcalls and are not really interested in the strong variety. A strong jump overcall is not the same as the more popular intermediate jump; a strong jump overcall is *strong*. The jump to 3♣ here shows a better suit (solid or near-solid) than a double followed by bidding ♣'s, in particular it encourages partner to bid 3NT with a ♥ stop (9 tricks are usually easier than 11).

South could bid 3NT here, as he should with a much weaker hand with a ♥ stop (say without the ♦A). The ♠ holding is irrelevant, partner is not asking for a ♠ stop. For those people who still play traditional Acol, Crowhurst is the Bible, refer to Vol 2 page 247.

Now I said South 'could' bid 3NT. I think the hand is perhaps too good and that a 3♦ cuebid (looking for slam) is a very real alternative. Note that 3♦ here is not a suit, North has advertised an excellent self sufficient ♣ suit and the final contract should be ♣'s or NT. 6♣ is then easily reached if North asks for aces. Note that it's best to use 4♦ (Kickback) as the ace ask when ♣'s are trumps as otherwise you may get too high. I don't know anybody who plays Kickback, I'll mention it when I (eventually) bring out something on RKCB.

Incidentally, do you know what a 3♥ bid at (1) means? Obviously something you cannot bid unless you have discussed it. In traditional Acol it shows a good hand with a good ♥ suit, a bid that will hardly ever come up (unless West has psyched). The best use of this jump cue bid is to ask partner to bid 3NT with a ♥ stop, indicating that you have a long running minor. This North hand (perhaps a little stronger) would be a typical example, useful if you don't play strong jump overcalls.

A Strong Opening

Board 14 from Friday 22nd Nov, E-W vul

Another deal playing traditional Acol: -

North	South (C)	West	North(me)	East	South
♠ -	♠ AKQ985	-	-	pass	2♠ (1)
♥ 983	♥ A4	pass	2NT (2)	pass	3♦ (3)
♦ A9862	♦ KQJ104	pass	5♦ (4)	pass	pass (5)
♣ J6543	♣ -	pass	pass		

- (1) strong. 8 or 9 playing tricks.
- (2) negative
- (3) 2nd suit
- (4) what North thinks may possibly make
- (5) feeble? With 11 tricks in view, North must surely contribute one for his raise to game?

So, an easy slam missed. 13 tricks are there and it would have been nice to bid even the small slam. So anything wrong with the bidding?

Yes! Let's start at the beginning. This South hand has 11 playing tricks and just two losers. It is a monster. It is *far* too strong for a strong two. The correct opening is 2♣, 2♠ is not game forcing. And what about this 3♦ bid at (3), a 2nd suit but it is *not* forcing after a negative response, North would have passed with the same hand missing the ♦A. North had no idea that South had a rock crusher and so 5♦ at (4) is fine. And South's final pass? Perhaps he did not realize that he had grossly underbid his hand so far?

Well then how should the bidding have gone playing traditional Acol? How about: -

	West	North	East	South
(1) strong and artificial				
(2) negative (some play waiting)				
(3) game forcing	-	-	pass	2♣ (1)
(4) natural	pass	2♦ (2)	pass	2♠ (3)
(5) 2 nd suit, still game forcing	pass	3♣ (4)	pass	3♦ (5)
(6) ♦ support, still game forcing	pass	4♦ (6)	pass	4NT (7)
(7) Blackwood	pass	5♦ (8)	pass	6♦
(8) one ace	pass	pass	pass	

Here we see the advantage of establishing the game force early. Since the auction is game forcing, North can happily bid 4♦ at (6). This is mildly encouraging, with a similar hand without the ♦A North would jump to 5♦ (fast arrival). The extra room enables South to ask for aces and 6♦ is cold when partner has one (and South is still able to play in a safe 5♦ if North has no ace). I cannot see an easy way for North to establish that it is the ♦A (when 7♦ makes) or the ♣A (when only 6♦ is there) unless you play Exclusion Blackwood. Then 5♣ (instead of 4NT) would ask for aces (keycards) outside ♣'s, but Chuck & myself are the only players I know who play this.

The bottom line. If you have game in your own hand then open with your strongest bid, 2♣ (or 2♦ if you play Benjamin twos). A strong two opening (2♦, 2♥ or 2♠, or via 2♣ if you play Benjamin) is not game forcing.

p.s. If you think that you need more high card points for a 2♣ opening, then refer to Crowhurst Vol 1, page 53. This hand easily qualifies.

At another table North bid 5♦ at (6). Wrong! 4♦ is forcing and best holding the ♦A.

A Play Problem – Solution

Dealer:	♠ 93		West	North	East	South
East	♥ A82					
E-W vul	♦ K109874		-	-	pass	1♣
	♣ K10		pass	1♦	pass	1♥
			pass	3♦	pass	3NT
			pass	pass	pass	
♠ Q7652	N	♠ 108				
♥ K1093	W E	♥ J5				
♦ 52	S	♦ AJ63				
♣ 83		♣ J9754				
	♠ AKJ4					
	♥ Q764					
	♦ Q					
	♣ AQ62					

South has 7 solid tricks and can easily develop one more in ♦'s. The ninth trick needs to come from a long ♦ unless you want to try the ♣ finesse or leading up to the ♥Q. So play the ♦Q? If this wins the trick then you are short of entries to the North hand to establish the ♦'s and have to fall back on the ♣ finesse. Unlucky? (that East defended well?).

Perhaps, but the safe play for a certain 9 tricks is to overtake the ♦Q with the ♦K. You then lose ♦AJ and a maximum of two ♥ tricks if East finds the ♥ switch. If East plays a ♥ higher than the ♥8 (so the ♥J on this actual lay-out), South covers and has a 2nd ♥ stop, if East plays a low ♥ then South ducks so that West is on lead and South again has two ♥ stops.

A Solid Overcall!

Board 5 from Friday 19th, N-S vul

Back to the question I posed earlier; what does one do if you have a genuine 2♣ rockcrusher but RHO opens in front of you?

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

Two (!) pairs overcalled just 1♠ with this East hand on Friday. 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 is either weak or very 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.

Bidding Quiz Answers

Hand A: 1♥ (and reverse into 2♠ next go).

Hand B: 4♠.

Hand C: 2♣.

Hand D: 2♣.

Hand E: Sorry about this one, I have no idea (I would open 2♣). Obviously you now need to force (to game), 3♦ is descriptive but the hand is too good (3♦ is non-forcing). I cannot find a sensible bid after any of these responses. A reverse into a non-existent major is very dangerous. So a jump into a non-existent ♣ suit? Or perhaps just Blackwood – but then how do you subsequently find out if partner has the all important ♦K? No, this really is getting all too silly. If you have to even think about your rebid when partner responds with a non-jump then you have probably made the wrong opening bid.

If you want an answer for (a) → (e) then ask Hans or Chuck?

One player on Friday opened 1♦ and rebid 5♦ over partner's 1♠. Silly. Isn't it so much simpler if you open 2♣?

Hand F: Playing traditional methods you cuebid the opponent's suit to show the equivalent of a 2♣ opener, so 2♦ here – game forcing. If you play Michaels cue bids then you have to double unless you play them as either weak or *very* strong.

Hand G: 2♥. Not good enough for 3♥.

Hand H: 3NT, a ♥ stop is all you need to bid 3NT after partner's strong jump overcall.

3♦ (a cuebid looking for a ♣ slam) is equally good (perhaps better).

Sequence J: A reverse is definitely (game) forcing after a two level response.

Sequence K: Usually played as game forcing. Most people play that the only sequence that is not forcing to game after a 2♣ opener is 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT (22-24), when responder may pass or pass after transferring.

Sequence L: Non-forcing. When playing strong twos, a new suit is not forcing after a negative response.