

Monday 12/4/04

Friday 16/4/04

Friday 23/4/04

1st Jeff/Hans 62%2nd Chuck/Clive 54%1st Einar/Clive 65%2nd Chuck/Terry 60%1st = Einar/Clive 58%1st = Chuck/Terry 58%

A bumper issue this week. I had a day off last Monday and so I did not produce a sheet for last week.

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

Hand A

Hand B

With Hand A RHO opens 2♠! What do you do?

♠ AKQJ84

♠ KJ5

♥ 98

♥ AKQ3

♦ J95

♦ KQ2

♣ A4

♣ A108

With Hand B you open 2NT and partner transfers with 3♥.

You obediently bid 3♠ and partner then bids 3NT. What do you do now?

Hand C

Hand D

With Hand C RHO opens 1♠, what do you bid?

♠ A

♠ QJ

♥ A10

♥ 932

♦ KJ87

♦ AQJ7

♣ AK6532

♣ AQ103

With Hand D RHO opens, what do you bid if he opens: -

(a) 1♣ (or 1♦)?

(b) 1♠ (or 1♥)?

Hand E

Hand F

With hand E LHO opens 1♠ and partner doubles. What is your bid?

♠ K983

♠ K

♥ 765

♥ KJ102

♦ 654

♦ 862

♣ J84

♣ K8652

With hand F partner opens 1♠, what is your response?

Hand G

Hand H

With Hand G partner opens 1♦ and RHO overcalls 1♠. Opponents are vulnerable, you are not. What is your bid?

♠ Q10985

♠ AKJ854

♥ AK

♥ AK84

♦ J72

♦ 6

♣ 875

♣ Q8

With Hand H you open 1♠ and partner respond 1NT. What is your rebid?

Hand K

Hand L

With Hand K you open 1♦ and partner responds 1NT. What do you do?

♠ AJ65

♠ QJ96

♥ KQ82

♥ A

♦ KQ864

♦ KJ943

♣ -

♣ 983

(a) Do you open Hand L in 1st seat?

(b) Suppose that you pass; LHO opens 1♠, partner doubles and RHO passes. What do you do?

A number of people have got this wrong in recent weeks, so let's have a look at how opener should bid balanced hands. We have already seen that an opening 1NT is 15-17 points. So let's clarify what we do with all our balanced hands if outside this range: -

- 12-14 points open 1 of a suit and rebid NT at the lowest level.
- 15-17 points open 1NT
- 18-19 points open 1 of a suit and jump rebid in NT.
- 20-21 points open 2NT
- 22-24 points open 2♣ and rebid 2NT
- 25+ points ...

..... there are various schemes as to what to do with more than 24 points. In simple Standard American you open 2♣ and then jump to an appropriate number of NT's. And, of course, there is always a 3NT opening, but most people reserve this as a *special* opening bid.

All of today's hands are balanced and will normally open or rebid in NT: -

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4	Hand 5
♠ Q65	♠ Q65	♠ Q65	♠ K98	♠ KJ9
♥ J105	♥ KJ5	♥ AQ5	♥ AQ10	♥ AQ10
♦ A875	♦ A875	♦ AJ75	♦ AK75	♦ AKJ5
♣ AQ7	♣ AQ7	♣ AQ7	♣ AQ7	♣ AQ7

1. 14 points. Open 1♦. If partner bids 1♥ or 1♠ then your rebid is 1NT. If partner bids 1NT or 2♦ (6-9) then you pass. If partner bids 2♣ then your rebid is 2NT – this still shows 12-14 points, it is partner who has pushed the bidding up to the two level and he has a good hand (a *good* 10 or more points, usually 11+) which can certainly cope with a 2NT rebid.
2. 16 points. So open 1NT.
3. 19 points. Too good for a 1NT opener but not good enough for 2NT. So with this hand you open 1♦ and then jump in NT. Thus if partner bids 1♥ or 1♠ then your rebid is 2NT. If partner bids 1NT or 2♦ (6-9) then you raise to 3NT. If partner bids 2♣ then your rebid is a jump in NT, so 3NT.
4. 22 points. Open 2NT.
5. 24 points. Open 2♣ and rebid 2NT over partner's 2♦ response.

A couple of points to note. With 12-14 points we rebid 1NT, but if partner has replied at the 2 level, then the rebid is 2NT. And what do we do if partner replies 1NT or 2♦ (our suit)? With 12-14 points we pass, with 18 points we rebid 2NT and with 19 points we rebid 3NT: -

Your point count ↓	Your rebid if partner responds at the 1 level	Your rebid if partner responds at the 2 level	Your rebid if partner responds 1NT or 2♦
12-14 points	1NT	2NT	pass
18 points	2NT	3NT	2NT
19 points	2NT	3NT	3NT

Humble Pie

Remember back in News-sheet 51 we discussed the sequence 1♦ - 1♥ - 3♦ - 3♥?

I said that the last bid was forcing but *everybody* in the club chose to disagree with me, saying it is weak with a 6 card suit. I found a paragraph in an Eric Crowhurst book to support my case but, unbelievably, some people still insist that I'm wrong. Anyway, I was browsing through a recent Marty Bergen book (More Points Smoints) and what did I find on page 53? Why, the *very same* sequence! It is under the title 'Forcing or Not'. So who's side is Marty on? ...

'Forcing. Once responder does not pass opener's invitational jump, the partnership is forced to game'. So, undisputable now, eh? Who's ordering the pies?

Don't hit me with those negative waves

- (Finding and) Losing a 4-4 fit

Board 2 from Friday 9th, N-S vul.

West East (H)

♠ 9 ♠ AKJ854
♥ J1073 ♥ AK84
♦ KJ5 ♦ 6
♣ K10742 ♣ Q8

Table A:

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	pass
1NT	pass	4♠ (1)	all pass

Table B:

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

4♥ is a far better contract than 4♠, so what went wrong? -

Table A: So what's with this 4♠ bid at (1)? Should one rebid a 6 card ♠ suit or introduce a 4 card ♥ suit at (1). Actually, expert opinion is divided, and it probably depends upon the quality of the suits. With a reasonable ♥ suit, I would always bid ♥'s. This East hand is good enough to insist upon game and I would bid 3♥ at (1).

Table B: East got this right and bid his ♥'s at (1), so what's with this 4♠ bid at (3)? Apparently East was worried that West may have just 3 ♥'s (2344 or similar shape). I would not worry about it, West may well have 4 or even 5 ♥'s for his bidding, and with the dreaded 2344 or similar shape he would bid 3NT at (2). And West's pass at (4)? I would bid 5♥, but that's because I would take partner's 4♠ as a cue bid (what else can it realistically be?), showing the ♠A, agreeing ♥'s and looking for slam. With no ace to cue, I would thus bid 5♥ at (4). I can see no logic behind bidding 3♥ at (1) and then converting to a natural (to play) 4♠ at (3). Can you?

And what happened? 4♥ was bid just once, ♥'s split 3-2 and it should have made easily. As it happened, declarer lost his way and went one down. 4♠ was either one or two down the *three* (!) times it was bid.

The bottom lines. When you find the good 4-4 fit, don't lose it! And don't worry about partner having a very unlikely distribution – remember Oddball (Donald Sutherland) in Kelly's Heroes? – *'Oh man, don't hit me with those negative waves so early in the morning'*.

The 4-4 fit is all important, it is the gold in Nancy, it is I've said all this before. What's more, it is usually better than a 5-3, 6-2, 6-1, 6-3 or any other fit.

Not convinced? Then just look at the next deal, where the 5-3 fit has better honours than the 4-4 fit but,

4-4 is better than 5-3

Board 10 from Monday 12th

Dealer: ♠ K84
East ♥ J854
both vul ♦ 83
♣ AKJ4

♠ 32 N ♠ J76
♥ AQ2 W E ♥ 73
♦ 97642 S ♦ AKQ105
♣ 1072 ♣ Q53
♠ AQ1095
♥ K1096
♦ J
♣ 986

Table A:

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

Table B:

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	dbl (1)
3♦ (4)	3♥	4NT (5)	pass
5♣ (6)	pass	5♦	pass
pass	pass		

Table A: First of all, do you double or overcall 1♠ with this South hand? It's close, but if you chose to overcall 1♠ then you have to bid the ♥'s later if you have a chance. 3♠ at (2) was invitational, although I prefer to play 3♦ as a sound raise to 3♠ and 3♠ as weakish. But South should bid 4♥ at (3), just in case North has a 4 card ♥ suit also!

Table B: This South chose to double at (1) and it certainly worked out better as the ♥ fit was easily located. West's jump at (4) was weak. At (5) East knew that the opponents had game and so he was always sacrificing in 5♦, but why not try muddying the waters a little with a 4NT Blackwood bid? Who knows, the opponents may then not double? 5♣ at (6) showed 1 key card playing 1430.

And what happened? 5♦ went 2 down, so minus 200. Even if it was doubled it would still be an excellent save against the 620 that the opponents get for 4♥ that probably makes. Unfortunately this fine 5♦ contract scored a cold bottom! Why? Because *every* other table was playing in 4♠, going either 1 or 2 down!

The bottom lines. The 4-4 fit is virtually always better than a 5-3 fit. Just study this hand – it's a perfect example of why. Even with far 'better' ♠'s and two certain ♥ losers, 4♥ still plays better? Why? Because the ♥ losers are there in either contract, but with ♥'s as trumps you can discard losing ♣'s on the long ♠'s and do not need the ♣ finesse. When 5-4 (or especially 4-5) in the majors, consider a double if it may be difficult to bid the other major later.

More Points Smoints – How much is an honour worth?

I am continually saying that point counts need adjusting. Marty Bergen has given a few very good guidelines about honour cards in his recent book: -

1. Subtract one point for each of the following: -
A singleton K, Q or J.
A doubleton KQ, KJ or QJ.
2. Add one point the following: -
Two tens, especially if they are in combination with higher honours in a suit of 4 or more cards.
3. Aces and kings are under-rated, Queens and Jacks are over-rated.

Overcall with a big hand?

Board 14 from Monday 12th, love all.

North (E) South (C)

♠ K983 ♠ A
 ♥ 765 ♥ A10
 ♦ 654 ♦ KJ87
 ♣ J84 ♣ AK6532

Table A:

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	4♣ (1)
pass	pass	pass	

Table B:

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

4♣ is a silly contract, so what went wrong? -

Table A: This 4♣ bid at (1) is incorrect. 4♣ here is pre-emptive, showing a weak hand with an 8 card ♣ suit. Actually, there are a few reasonable alternatives with this hand. You could simply bid 3NT; this promises a stop in the suit bid and a long solid minor, but I would like a better ♣ suit. A 1NT bid is 15-18 but this hand is too good. It's best to start off with a double; if partner bids 2♦ or 2♥ then a 3♣ bid would show a hand too good to simply overcall 2♣ (so 18+ points). However, I think that 2 or 3NT after doubling is OK as you have every suit stopped. The problem with 3♣ is that partner will not bid 3NT without a ♥ stop, and you have the ♥'s stopped. Anyway, it's all academic here as South made a weak bid

Table B: This time South did double, but what about North's 2♣ bid? North has an excellent ♠ stop, so why not 1NT? The problem is that 1NT shows 6-9 points and this hand is too weak. So, when your only suit is the opponent's and you have insufficient values to bid 1NT, bid your cheapest 3 card suit. Thus 2♣ is correct. South, of course, hoped for better ♣'s and obviously bid 3NT at (3).

And what happened? 3NT was bid and made at just this one table. Another pair managed to stop in 2NT and made +1. But two pairs managed to find the silly 4♣ contract (I don't know the bidding at the other table).

The bottom lines. A 4♣/♦ overcall is a weak bid. With a hand too strong to overcall, double first. If you think that 3NT is going to have a shot, don't bid 4♣!

How many points for a negative double?

Board 4 from Friday 6th Jan, both vul.

West East

♠ Q5 ♠ AJ76
 ♥ K764 ♥ 83
 ♦ J985 ♦ Q1042
 ♣ 1073 ♣ AJ2

West North East South

pass pass 1♦ 1♠

dbl (1)

Remember this deal from news-sheet 67?

What happened? N-S got a good score and West was criticized for making the negative double with just 6 points. I said that West's bid was perfectly correct but a number of club members disagreed, saying that a negative double of 1♠ forces partner to the two level and so needs to have more values. I did not bother to reply at the time, but I have just browsed through 'More Points Smoints' – page 154. Marty Bergen says 'a negative double of 1♠ promises 4 or more ♥'s and 6 or more points. Guess I'm right yet again?

When an opponent bids your suit... Board 9 from Monday 12th, E-W vul.

East (A) This hand is from Monday. RHO dealt and passed at my table. This hand then opened 1♠ and a dodgy 4♠ contract was reached. But at one table

♠ AKQJ84 RHO opened 2♠ (weak) and I was asked what this East hand should do?

♥ 98 Apparently he doubled but ‘unfortunately’ his partner removed the double.

♦ J95 Of course partner will remove the double – it is for take-out and partner

♣ A4 cannot possibly have anything in ♠’s. The opening bid has fixed you; the only thing that you can do is pass. On a good day partner will make a take-out double and then you can pass and thus convert it to penalties.

The bottom lines. This is a virtual quote from news-sheet 74- ‘*When the opponents bid your best suit it may upset you, but think about a pass. Even if they are non-vul you may get a good score*’. Remember that an immediate double is for take-out. And also remember that you have a partner – maybe he will double for take-out.

When an opponent bids your suit... part 2 Board 12 from Friday 23rd

Dealer:	♠ AJ742	<u>Table A:</u>				
West	♥ 9875	West	North	East (G)	South	
N-S vul	♦ K6	1♦	1♠	pass (1)	pass	
	♣ A2	dbl (2)	pass	pass (3)	pass	
♠ 3	N	♠ Q10985	<u>Table B:</u>			
♥ J642	W E	♥ AK	West	North	East	South
♦ AQ1083	S	♦ J72	1♦	1♠	dbl (4)	pass
♣ KQ4		♣ 875	2♥ (5)	pass	3NT	pass
	♠ K6		pass	pass		
	♥ Q103					
	♦ 954					
	♣ J10963					

Table A: E-W were playing negative doubles and so East cannot double at (1) for penalties. When you play negative doubles you have to pass when you hold a penalty hand and wait for partner’s re-opening double. And what should West bid at (2)? He must re-open with a double – just in case partner has a penalty hand. Well bid.

Table B: Not so well bid at this table. East did not have his thinking cap on and incorrectly doubled at (4) although they too were playing negative doubles. When partner bid the obvious 2♥ at (5) he was ‘annoyed’ and so bid a silly 3NT. Down 3 for a deserved bottom.

The bottom lines. Remember that when you play negative doubles then you cannot double for penalties! With a penalty hand you pass and await partner’s re-opening double. Thus, when you are opener and LHO overcalls and partner passes, it is nearly always correct to re-open with a double just in case partner has the penalty hand.

One more point. The 2♥ bid at (5) is not a reverse. It is simply supporting partner who has shown ♥’s with his negative double. I go into this in more detail later in this news-sheet.

Double for penalties with cards in partner's suit?Board 21 from Friday 23rd

Dealer:	♠ K862	West	North	East	South
North	♥ KQJ973				
N-S vul	♦ A63	-	1♥	2♣ (1)	4♥ (2)
	♣ -	dbl (3)	pass	pass	pass

♠ 974	N	♠ AJ5
♥ A2	W E	♥ -
♦ J84	S	♦ K10975
♣ AK875		♣ J10932
	♠ Q103	
	♥ 108654	
	♦ Q2	
	♣ Q64	

4♥ scored 790 for N-S. At another table they got 990 in the same contract. Not very good for E-W when 5♣ doubled made their way at the 3rd table. So what's wrong with E-W's bidding? First of all, what do you do at (1)? Difficult. I guess the options are pass, double, an UNT or overcall with a minor. Nothing is perfect! An UNT would show minor suits like this but partner may have ♠'s and then a ♠ contract would play well. A 2 level overcall is not as bad as some maintained, it should be close to the values of an opening bid and this hand is. I would prefer 2♦ to 2♣. And what about a double? Again, a reasonable option. And pass is also reasonable. It's difficult and I would not argue with anything. The 2♣ overcall chosen is probably the worse choice but it should have worked out very well!

I was South, and you know me. With 10 combined trumps I bid to the limit – so 4♥.

West also knows me, and so knows that I have 5♥'s and so his partner has at most one. So what do you do at (3)? Partner has overcalled at the two level and you have a nice hand. At least, it's a nice hand if playing in ♣'s! In defence it is only one trick. Even though the opponents are vul and you are not, I would bid 5♣. It should go one down, but if the opponents do not find the ♠ switch in time (or lead ♦A or pop up with the ♦A when a ♦ is led by West) then it makes; either way it's better than conceding a huge score defending 4♥ doubled. And if partner really did have a decent 2♣ overcall? Just replace the ♠5 with the ♣Q, then the 2♣ bid is fine and the results would be the same.

At the end of play West criticised his partner's overcall. As I said, it would not be my choice but was not too bad. No, the really poor bid was West's double!

The bottom line? Be wary of doubling opponents with length and strength in partner's suit.

Pass partner's take-out double?Board 14 from Friday 23rd

Dealer:	♠ 84	West	North	East (L)	South
East	♥ K732	-	-	pass (1)	1 ♠
Love all	♦ A106	dbl (2)	pass (3)	pass (4)	pass
	♣ AKJ4				

♠ 52	N	♠ QJ96
♥ J109654	W E	♥ A
♦ 82	S	♦ KJ943
♣ Q107		♣ 983
	♠ AK1073	
	♥ Q8	
	♦ Q75	
	♣ 653	

It's not often that three passes in one auction get a comment from me, but here goes: - First, East's initial pass; it's close, but with two decent suits I would open 1♦ – the hand conforms to the rule of 20. Anyway, pass is not unreasonable, but what about West's double at (2)? Nowhere near good enough and totally wrong shape. You could pass, but a weak jump overcall of 3♥ is perhaps a reasonable alternative non-vul.

North elected to pass the double at (3); I suspect that many players would re-double, as would I. Finally, what about East's 2nd pass at (4)? This converts his partner's take-out into penalties. The trump suit is not good enough sitting under the bidder and I would bid 1NT. 2NT is possible, but it's not quite good enough and I don't really like the singleton ♥A.

Anyway, East's decision to pass opposite West's poor double led to minus 460 and a bad score. Not a complete bottom, as at one other table the score was also 460 (3NT+2).

The bottom lines. Don't double with a 5 card major. Definitely do not double with a 6 card major. Remember the weak jump overcall if you want to bid with hands like this.

Don't pass 1NT with a distributional handBoard 5 from Friday 23rd, N-S vul.

West	East	West	North	East (K)	South
♠ K98	♠ AJ65	-	pass	1♦	pass
♥ 764	♥ KQ82	1NT	pass	pass (1)	pass
♦ J97	♦ KQ864				
♣ A652	♣ -				

1NT is not the best spot, so what went wrong? The opening is correct, as is West's 1NT response, but what should East rebid at (1). You have to think about partner's 1NT bid. It denies 4 cards in either major and so has at least 7 cards in the minors. The hand is a mis-fit unless partner has ♦'s (he probably has at least two); either way, a reverse into 2♥ or 2♠ is unwarranted. Passing 1NT cannot be right with this shape and I would rebid 2♦.

And what happened? 1NT made +2 but it was beaten by 2♦ making +3 at another table. At a third table the contract was 4♥ minus 3; presumably that East reversed into 2♥?

The bottom lines. It is rarely correct to pass partner's 1NT response with a void. Do not reverse with inadequate values. It is OK to rebid a 5 card suit if you know that partner has support (partner's 1NT bid virtually guarantees ♦ support here).

The 5-3 fit is usually better than NT

Board 23 from Monday 12th, both vul.

West East (B)

♠ A10932 ♠ KJ5
♥ 762 ♥ AKQ3
♦ 1097 ♦ KQ2
♣ 96 ♣ A108

Table A:

West North East South
pass pass 2NT pass
3♥ (1) pass 3♠ pass
3NT (2) pass pass (3) pass

Table B:

West North East South
pass pass 2NT pass
3♥ (1) pass 3♠ pass
3NT (2) pass 4♠ (3) all pass

So what did you bid at (3) with Hand B in this week's quiz? Three out of the four players on Monday got it wrong.

Table A: This was the bidding at 3 tables. Obviously West transfers at (1) and with just a 5 card suit, 3NT at (2) is correct. East's pass at (3) is where it went wrong. With good 3 card support and just one stop in ♣'s, East should prefer the 5-3 fit and bid 4♠.

Table B: This East bid correctly. Not too difficult but good enough to earn a complete top when others do not understand the basics.

What happened? A ♣ was led against 3NT, but fortunately the ♠ Q was onside (with South) and so the contract made +1 when the ♥'s split 3-3. If the ♠ Q was offside then N-S would score four ♣ tricks, ♠ Q and ♦ A for two down. Anyway. E-W were 'lucky' but scored poorly anyway as 11 or 12 tricks are easy in a ♠ contract.

The bottom lines. Remember that a transfer followed by 3NT promises a 5 card suit. The NT opener should normally pass with 2 trumps and convert with 4 trumps. With 3 trumps it is normally best to play in the 5-3-fit, especially if responder is weak. Transfers and Stayman apply after 1NT and 2NT openings.

Raising Partner's Overcall.

Board 1 from Friday 16th, love all

I was partnering Chuck on Friday (yes, I finally got a game in having sat out for weeks). Anyway, Chuck and I play a reasonably sophisticated system and I was asked to explain this sequence: -

North South (me) West North East South
♠ 985 ♠ KQ4 - - 1♣ 1♥
♥ QJ87 ♥ K10965 pass 2♣ (1) pass 2♥
♦ AJ1032 ♦ K pass pass
♣ K ♣ 9432

2♣ at (1) is a bid of the opponent's suit. In this situation it is best to play both 2♥ and 3♥ as weak bids. With a sound raise to 3♥ (i.e. inviting partner to game) or better then bid the opponent's suit.

And what happened? At the two other tables they bid to 3♥; as it happened, the cards behaved and 10 tricks were made on every occasion. But on a different layout it may well be that 2♥ just makes and 3♥ goes one down.

For those inexperienced ears - 'read and weep'

(What is a reverse?)

In last week's news-sheet I gave four sequences about reverses. In particular I said that this sequence was not a reverse and does not show extra values.

	W	N	E	S	W
Sequence J:	1♦	2♣	2♥	pass	2♠?

One distinguished member (Chuck of course) disagrees (I think?) and insisted that I print this article from the ACBL Vol 7 No 11 magazine: -

- ♠ A The hand is from the 'points of view' section and the panel were asked what
- ♥ J643 to bid when the bidding has gone -
- ♦ KQ8752
- ♣ AQ

	W	N	E	S	W
	1♦	pass	1♠	pass	?

Obviously a 2♥ bid now is a reverse (showing extra values), everybody but an absolute beginner knows that. And the panel were split 2-2 as to whether to reverse into 2♥ or to bid 2♦. No problem, and I agree it's close. So why was I asked to reproduce this article? I'm not sure, but I think that the asker believes that the summary made by the mediator is significant? :

'A reverse by opener – a rebid in a new suit that prevents responder from returning to opener's original suit at the two level – promises at least a medium strength hand of about 17-18 points. Most modern partnerships treat opener's reverse as forcing for at least one round. The dilemma faced by our panellists is that this hand has the strength – 16 high card points plus 2 length points for the six card suit – but not the ideal suit quality in ♥'s and ♦'s. That has lead to a split decision about what to rebid.'

Our intrepid distinguished member had scrawled over this – 'Read and weep. This proves my point', and insisted that I reproduce it in full. No problem, I'm always more than willing to reproduce any comments from anybody.

But am I missing something? Perhaps I'm going senile in my old age??

Obviously this is a bog standard reverse. Trivial, even to somebody with my limited intellect. But this has *nothing* to do with sequence J. With sequence J opener was hoping for a sequence like 1♦ - 1♥ - 1♠. An opponent has interfered and *partner* has decided to bid 2♥. It is *partner* who has raise the level to 2♥ with a forcing bid and not you, so a 2♠ bid here (***the cheapest bid possible***) **most definitely** does not show extra values. I will eat my hat (shorts, shirt, shoes etc.) if anybody can find an expert quote that contradicts me here.

I'm bringing some cotton buds and a box of tissues for our distinguished member next week. Perhaps he will be bringing me some Tums?

	you		partner		you
Hand J	↓		↓		↓
♠ AQ74	1♦	pass	2♥	pass	2♠?

♥ 65

♦ AQ764

♣ 764

Consider this sequence. You obviously open 1♦ with a view to rebidding 1♠ if partner responds 1♥. Partner, however, responds with a strong jump shift of 2♥; so what is your bid now? Anybody who does not bid 2♠ because they think that that shows extra values really needs to have some lessons. There simply is no other remotely sensible bid.

The definition of a reverse given in the ACBL article is not applicable when partner has made a strong jump shift. It is also not applicable to interrupted sequences where the opponents have ‘forced’ partner to bid higher than he normally would.

♠ A Let’s take the ACBL hand and change the bidding slightly.

♥ J643

♦ KQ8752

♣ AQ

W	N	E	S	W
1♦	1♠	dbl	pass	?

Partner’s (East) double is negative. What do you bid? 2♥ is woefully inadequate of course. It is *not* a reverse. Partner has promised 4♥’s with his negative double and a 2♥ bid is simply supporting partner at the lowest level possible. I would bid an invitational 3♥. 4♥ or a game forcing 2♠ are possible but I think the hand is not good enough.

Cucumber Sandwiches

Board 13 from Friday 23rd, both vul

Obviously I am apt to reproduce a hand where an observation of mine turns out to be correct. On this occasion by preferred bid would have failed, but I am always fair? N’est pas?

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ K74	♠ AQ5	-	pass	1NT (1)	pass
♥ J764	♥ A4	pass (2)	pass		
♦ A103	♦ KJ952			(1) 12-14	
♣ K106	♣ 842				

The contract made 2 overtricks and there was a discussion about West’s pass at (2). I believe that it is correct. The norm for raising a weak 1NT to 2NT is 11 points; this hand is totally flat (so deduct a point). The only 4 card suit has just one jack and no intermediates (so bad). But the two 10’s are a plus factor. Close, but all in all, I would pass.

East was not happy – he maintains that ‘11 points’ opposite a 1NT opener is 11 points and should raise to 2NT. It would have worked on this deal, but 3NT will only make opposite this West hand if it is super max and the cards behave. How did the cards behave? ♣A was with South. ♦Q was with North (the ‘natural’ way for East to play the suit). Both the ♥K and ♥Q were with South. And every suit broke evenly. South’s natural lead was a ♠ (J109x) which does not hurt East.

So, *everything* (!!!) was correctly placed, East was absolutely max, the lead was OK, yet just 9 tricks were made! I think that my point is proven? This West hand is not usually good enough for a raise to 2NT. If East is min then 2NT will usually go down and if East is max then 3NT will usually go down.

The bottom line. Deduct a point for 4333 type shape. Points belong in long suits.

Body Language

Board 2 from Monday 12th

Dealer: ♠ K1075
East ♥ J54
N-S vul ♦ K1032
♣ K5

♠ 9 N ♠ A86432
♥ A876 W E ♥ KQ10
♦ 9863 S ♦ 4
♣ 8764 ♣ QJ2
♠ QJ
♥ 932
♦ AQJ7
♣ AQ103

Table A:

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

Table B:

West	North	East	South (D)
-	-	1♠ (1)	pass (2)
pass	pass (3)	pass	

Table C:

West	North	East	South (D)
-	-	1♠ (1)	pass (2)
pass	1NT (3)	pass	3NT (4)
pass	pass	pass	

There are a few interesting points on this deal: -

- Table A: This East was unfamiliar with Standard American and incorrectly thought that 1♣ was the opening with this hand type. And what did you do with Hand D at (2) over a 1♣ opening in the quiz? I would bid 1NT (15-18), but 1♦ is not unreasonable. The *only* time when it is acceptable to overcall in a 4 card suit is when it is at the *one* level, is a good suit, and you have length & strength in the suit opened. Anyway, I want to go into the play at this table. What would you lead as South? Partner has supported your ♦'s, but that does not promise the king. South chose the ♥3, with which I totally agree. No problem, except that his partner (North) then made a gesture implying he did not like the lead. This is unethical. Now South obviously then 'knew' that his partner held the ♦K, but when he got in he stoically continued with a ♥ - quite right. You are not allowed to take notice of partner's mannerisms or gestures.
- Table B: Back to the bidding. What did you do with Hand D at (2) over a 1♠ opening in this week's quiz? Now you cannot bid ♦'s as a 4 card suit at the two level is a definite no-no. You have the values for 1NT but have no ♠ stop, so that's out. Double? There was considerable discussion after the session about this. My view is that a double of 1♠ should show 4 ♥'s unless you have adequate compensation. And what is adequate compensation? – an opening hand+ with 3 reasonable ♥'s. And what is reasonable? Up to you, but 932 is not in my opinion! I agree with the pass (but only if your partner understands balancing). But should North pass at (3)? Let's look at Table C: -
- Table C: This South (me) also passed at (2). So what is this 1NT overcall by North at (3) with just 10 points? The answer is that in the balancing seat you do not need the normal 15-18 points for a 1NT overcall. Why? Because you know that partner has some points. The actual range of a 1NT bid in this position is up to the partnership, 10-13, 11-13, 12-14 are all common. Marty Bergen says 10-14 (More Points Smoints). It depends upon your (partner's) style. If partner is likely to pass a 1♠ opening with a poor flat 14-15 points (as I am) then play 10-13/14.

And what happened? 2♠ doubled went two off. 300 to N-S would normally be an excellent score, but two N-S pairs were allowed to make 3NT. And note what I said about this South hand not being that great, even with a combined 26 points 3NT should not make (miserable ♥'s).

The bottom line. It's up to you when you should double 1♠ holding just 3 ♥'s. Here are a few example hands in which I give *my* opinion: -

What to do when RHO opens 1♠

Hand M	Hand N	Hand P	Hand Q	Hand R	Hand D
♠ QJ2	♠ 54	♠ 8	♠ 8	♠ 8	♠ QJ
♥ 93	♥ K84	♥ AJ983	♥ AJ983	♥ AQJ983	♥ 932
♦ AQJ7	♦ AK75	♦ Q95	♦ AJ5	♦ AQ5	♦ AQJ7
♣ AQ103	♣ AJ96	♣ J963	♣ K983	♣ A98	♣ AQ103

M. 1NT. Here you do have a ♠ stop.

N. Double. Now this hand does have adequate compensation. The ♥'s are just about good enough and there are no 'wasted' values in ♠'s.

P. Double. Normally one should overcall with a 5 card suit, but this hand is not good enough to venture to the two level, especially if vulnerable. If partner responds 2♣ or 2♦, then pass. Do not convert to 2♥ as that shows a very good hand (see R).

Q. Bid 2♥. Do not double a major if you have 5 cards in the other major when you have sufficient points to overcall.

R. Double. And then bid 2♥ over a 1NT, 2♣ or 2♦ response from partner. This shows a hand that is too good for a simple 2♥ overcall.

D. Pass. 16 points, but the ♠ QJ doubleton are very poor cards. They are totally useless unless partner has an honour or 10xx, and that is against the odds. The ♥ 932 are also pathetic, it's OK if they were a minor suit, but not in the other major. I would pass the hand and wait for partner's balancing bid. If partner cannot balance than it is unlikely that you have game.

Hand S	Not happy about my pass with hand D? I'm not enthralled with it either, but it's the best of a bad set of choices. And what about this one? Very similar.
♠ QJ	It comes from Marty Bergen's book 'More Points Smoints'
♥ KJ5	With good ♥'s, many people would double (it's a better double than hand D).
♦ KJ65	What does Marty Say? ' <i>Pass. You are not proud of your 3 points in ♠'s and</i>
♣ KJ42	<i>it's not mandatory to overcall just because you have 15 points. Keep quiet.'</i>

And just one final point, compare hands N and S. Hand N is also a Marty Bergen hand (Marty sez vol 2) and Marty sez that '*you should not consider any action other than double*'. And what's the difference? That QJ in the opponent's suit. Put these 3 points somewhere else and action is warranted.

The bottom lines. Cards like QJ doubleton and singleton king are not worth their full value. If they are in RHO's suit, they are much more likely to score in defence rather than offence. On the rare occasions when it's correct to double 1♠ when holding just 3 ♥'s, you need *both* an honour in the ♥ suit *plus* a good hand.

A Poor Slam

Board 14 from Friday 16th, love all

North (F)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ K	♠ AQJ74	-	-	pass	1 ♠
♥ KJ102	♥ 5	pass	2 ♣ (1)	pass	3 ♦ (2)
♦ 862	♦ AQ743	pass	3NT	pass	4 ♦ (3)
♣ K8652	♣ AQ	pass	5 ♦	pass	6 ♦
		all pass			

Obviously a very poor slam, so whose fault?

When playing a strong NT you need 11 points (or a very good 10) to respond in a new suit at the two level. The correct bid at (1) is 1NT. This hand is *not* a good 10 points, a singleton in partner's suit is a bad holding. Now West said 'I didn't bid 1NT because the hand is not balanced'. I've been over this dozens of times, a 1 NT bid over partner's major suit opening does *not* promise a balanced hand; it is often unbalanced, simply showing insufficient points to respond at the two level.

And 3 ♦ at (2)? 2 ♦ is not forcing (unless you play 2/1) and so 3 ♦ is fine. But what about 4 ♦ at (3)? South has already shown a strong two suiter and North has chosen NT's. I would pass. This ♦ suit is nowhere near good enough a suit to suggest slam when partner has promised nothing much in the suit. Anyway, when you remove partner's 3NT at pairs scoring there is little point in playing in 5 ♦ and so the miserable slam was bid.

Fortunately a ♥ was not lead and the ♦K was doubleton onside and so the slam luckily came home.

The bottom line. Playing a strong NT you need 11 points for a new suit at the two level. Don't suggest slam in a suit as poor as AQxxx if partner has not shown anything in the suit.

Bidding Quiz Answers

Hand A: Pass! Double is for take-out.

Hand B: 4 ♠. The 5-3 ♠ fit will play better than 3NT.

Hand C: Double. Too good for 2 ♣ or 1NT.

Hand D: (a) 1NT. 15-18 with a stop. I guess that 1 ♦ is not totally unreasonable over 1 ♣.

(b) Double or pass. It's up to you (and your partner) if you can pass with hands this strong, and what sort of holding you need in the other major when a major is opened and you double. I would pass.

Hand E: 2 ♣. You cheapest 'suit'. Not good enough for 1NT (6-9 pts).

Hand F: 1NT. The hand is not good enough for 2 ♣ unless you play a weak NT.

Hand G: Do you play negative doubles? If not, then double for penalties. If you do play negative doubles then you should pass and await partner's re-opening double.

Hand H: 3 ♥, forcing. Look for the 4-4 ♥ fit.

Hand K: 2 ♦. Partner has denied both majors. He almost certainly has ♦ support and a ♦ contract will play better than NT with a void. 3 ♦ is a reasonable alternative but is usually a 6 card suit. The hand is not good enough to reverse into 2 ♥ or 2 ♠.

Hand L: (a) I would open 1 ♦. At the table this hand chose to pass. Reasonable I guess.

(b) 1NT. I prefer this to 2NT, 2 ♦ or 3 ♦, all of which are quite reasonable options and I will award top marks for any of these bids. The bid I don't like was the one chosen at the table – pass. These ♠'s are not good enough to convert to penalties when sitting under the ♠ bidder.