

Monday 17/5/04

Friday 21/5/04

1st Dave/Bob 68%
 2nd = Kenneth/David 56%
 2nd = Clive/Alex 56%

1st Chuck/Richard (UK) 60%
 2nd Dave/Bob 56%

A bumper issue this week. This is because Hans gave me an article which he wanted me to include and I had the odd comment or twenty on it.

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

Hand A

Hand B

♠ A10532 ♠ A83
 ♥ 9 ♥ Q8642
 ♦ KQ ♦ 83
 ♣ AK962 ♣ 963

With Hand A you open 1♠ and partner responds 1NT.
 What do you bid?

With Hand B partner opens 1NT, what do you do?

Hand C

Hand D

♠ AQ72 ♠ J2
 ♥ K94 ♥ A543
 ♦ K96 ♦ AJ865
 ♣ AK6 ♣ 72

(a) what do you open with Hand C?
 (b) suppose you open 1♣ and partner bids 1♥, what now?

With Hand D partner opens 1♥, what is your response?

Hand E

Hand F

♠ K72 ♠ A85
 ♥ 107 ♥ AQ1043
 ♦ A ♦ A
 ♣ AKQ10972 ♣ AQ64

With Hand E LHO opens 1♦ and this is passed round to you.
 What is your bid?

(a) What do you open with Hand F?
 (b) Suppose you choose 1♥ with the intention of rebidding 3♣ over a 1♠ response from partner. Fine, but LHO overcalls 2♣ and partner responds 2♠, what do you bid now?

Hand G

Hand H

♠ 53 ♠ K1085
 ♥ AKJ109854 ♥ Q1072
 ♦ A108 ♦ AJ
 ♣ - ♣ 943

With Hand G partner opens 1♦ and you respond 2♥ (strong).
 Suppose partner bids 4♥ and you want to investigate slam,
 what do you bid?

With Hand H partner opens 1♦ and you bid 1♥. Partner then
 rebids 2NT (18-19 pts), what do you bid?

Hand J

Hand K

♠ 752 ♠ J8
 ♥ KQ743 ♥ AJ75
 ♦ KQ54 ♦ 108432
 ♣ K ♣ Q8

With Hand J you open 1♥ and partner responds 1♠, what is
 your rebid?

With Hand K partner opens 1♠ and you respond 1NT. Partner
 then bids 2♣, what do you do?

Reaction to the article 'No Idea about pre-empts? – part 2' in the club news-sheet 78

Hans was kind enough to type up his reaction to this article of mine where I (as director) decided to award both sides an average score when there was a difference of opinion between Hans and Chuck. Hans requested that his 'story' be reproduced in the news-sheet, so here it is in full. Obviously I have a few comments and so the words in brackets are my addition and I comment on these points later. This was the full deal: -

Dealer:	♠ A	Board 5 from Monday 26 th			
North	♥ K1076				
N-S vul	♦ K62	West	North	East (A)	South
	♣ KJ854	(Hans)	(Chuck)	(Jeff)	(me)
♠ K1086	N	♠ QJ53	-	1♣	4♦ (1) pass
♥ QJ2	W E	♥ A5	pass	dbl	pass pass
♦ 3	S	♦ AQJ9854	pass		
♣ Q10973		♣ -			
	♠ 9742				
	♥ 9843				4♦ made +1 for a complete 'top' but I later
	♦ 107				adjusted the score to give everybody an average.
	♣ A62				

I have typed Hans' contribution in a different font so that his writings and mine are not confused. The comments in brackets in my font are my additions for clarity. So, here goes: -

This article is a story about a board in which I (Hans) and some other well known players of this club (Jeff, Chuck, Terry) were involved. After reading this article and seeing all four hands I disagree with the Director's decision and the changing of the score even more. But before explaining why, first a little history.

About 15 years ago I learned to play bridge over a period of 6 months
(A) with an evening session every week. The bidding system I learned was Acol. During this period you only learned the basic principles. Because I liked the game I joined a Bridge club in my village. To give an impression of what this club was like: there were 5 lines (A-E), with each line comprising 16 pairs. Because of promotion/relegation during the season, all the good players were in the higher lines with beginners and less gifted players in the lower lines. There was a considerable difference in strength; in the A-line there were at least 4 people who play or played in the highest divisions in Holland (they sometimes even got relegated). The lower lines were on a par with people of the Pattaya Bridge Club, out to enjoy their game. The advantage of this structure is that less gifted players are not 'bothered' by the good players or visa-versa. And the more gifted players improve by playing against the better ones.

After playing for seven years in this club I was asked if I could do some voluntary work for the club. Because this club was run on a voluntary basis I said yes and joined the technical commission (which consisted of 8 people, having meetings every 2 months). This technical commission had the responsibility for all the competitions going on within the club. I needed to pass an exam in order to do this work correctly. To succeed in this exam I had to follow 12 lessons (lasting 4 hours each) given by a highly rated bridge referee. It was also necessary to have

a certain level of Bridge playing skill in order to get the answers right. I passed this exam, although it was tough. I never realised that there was so much to it.

I did this work for the technical commission for 6 years. In those 6 years I learned a lot about refereeing, especially the 'standard' situations which occur, and how to deal with them. This also helped to improve my skill at the game.

After relating all of this, I think that I can give a sensible reaction to the article in news-sheet 78.

Point 1: First, a general description of what I have learned about a pre-empt is: -

- (B) 1- An opening in a suit at the 3-level or higher. 6♣ is also a pre-empt.
- (C) 2- A double jump or more in a suit after an opening by the opponents.
- (D) 3- The bid should show the required number of playing tricks minus two when vulnerable and minus three when non-vulnerable.
- (E) 4- You have at least 7 cards in the suit.
- (F) 5- After you have pre-empted you have said it all; never bid again.
- (G) 6- A pre-empt bid usually has the purpose of making it difficult for the opponents rather than making the contract.

♠ QJ53 So back to the 4♦ bid after RHO had opened 1♣:

♥ A5 East (this hand) was showing 7 playing tricks because we were vulnerable,

♦ AQJ9854 When you look at the hand there are about $7\frac{1}{2}$ tricks, but I can

♣ - understand that East thought that the 4♦ bid was high enough against such excellent players. My own opinion of this pre-empt is this: up until

- (H) 5 years ago I made pre-empt bids with the same kind of hands. But then I partnered someone who explained to me that this kind of hand has too much potential. We made some special agreements on when to open with a pre-empt bid, especially when first or second hand. But these are partnership agreements (every partnership has it's own agreements) and not rules. And we agreed no psyches! If you want to know what psyches (J) are, I can give some nice examples.

- (K) Point 2: I smiled, but absolutely not with a wry smile, because the person who asked the question (Hans is referring to me, Terry) already knew the answer. The second reason why I smiled was because of this questioning. This gave me the impression that South (Terry) considered making a bid. And seeing my hand I thought that this pre-empt had perfect timing, i.e. South had a terrible decision to make.
- (L) Point 3; Seeing this North hand (Chuck's), this double can only be for penalty. So the decision that he can make at least 4 tricks to set the contract on his own, his partner (Terry) has not shown any values. Or was it some kind of convention for a certain lead?
- (M) So now my decision as a referee when I was asked to solve this kind of dispute: This is easy as these situations occur quite often. Here N-S think that they have been mis-lead by some sort of 'hidden' partnership agreement of E-W.
The situation when there is clearly something wrong with E-W's bidding is when West (Hans), after South's pass, makes a bid other than pass so that E-W end up in a game contract of 4♠ or 5♦. But even then the decision (if E-W have done something wrong) should also be based on the level of the E-W players and how long they have been playing together.
- (N) Speaking about level, these N-S players should know better than punish the wrong bid of East by making the right bid themselves.
- (P) At point 2: South asked the meaning of a bid and whatever the answer was he would pass. I learned that this is not smart; it may help opponents to come back on the 'right bidding track'. It also can confuse your partner because it gives him the idea that you have something. If I remember it well there is/was a rule that even forbids you to ask things about the bidding when the answer will not influence your bidding. But these kinds of rules only apply to players playing at the highest level.
- (Q) At point 3: For a player at this level (Chuck) it is a very strange decision to double knowing that the ♦K is offside. Was this decision influenced by the questions of partner or just a wrong bid, showing that Chuck is just human? By just passing N-S only lose -150, which must be a good result.
- (R) Conclusion: The bid of 4♦ at (1) is completely legal and there is absolutely no reason to change the score.

Some general remarks:

- (S) Changing a score without both parties agreeing happens almost never. A score is a result of a bidding sequence between two sides in which they put energy into making the right bids. And when a score is changed, there are special rules. It can't just be taken out to give both sides their average. In this example the change will probably result in a so called 'split score'. Remember this also: changing the score affects the other results on the board. A pair that has nothing to do with this dispute can drop in the end result from 1st to 2nd place...
- The two most complicated situations for a referee to solve are:
 1. When pairs play a lot of conventions which they don't understand or simply forget.
 2. Trying to solve a problem (for example leading from the wrong hand)
- (T) without a referee, and after the play asking for the referee when one of the opponents is unhappy with the score. - calling the referee on time is absolutely not impolite, it is part of the game. It helps to avoid really difficult situations.
- (U) I hope that this story can be published in the next club news sheet (always willing to oblige – so here it is in full – Terry) so that things become more clear for a lot of people. It also gives a better picture of Jeff who is absolutely not misleading people at the Bridge table.

Greetings, Hans.

Well, there you have it. Wasn't it refreshing to get away from my tedious articles about the same old things (denying 4 card majors, 1NT openings out or range etc). Many thanks Hans, a nice little article and to the point. You clearly put your point of view across and I certainly don't mind anybody criticising me (as long as you don't mind me getting my word in). I can take it. Anyway, we are now back in the real world, and I (this is Terry from now on) obviously have a few comments!

(A) When Hans refers to Acol it is not Acol in the recognised sense. It is 'Dutch' Acol, a system with which I am very familiar (I had to play it for 5 years when I lived in Holland) but that I happen to despise, but that's beside the point. Dutch Acol is a strong NT and 4 card majors. But because it is lousy to play 4 card majors with a strong NT the Dutch try to avoid it by always open 4 card suits up the line. So a 4 card major is only opened when exactly 4333 or 3433 or 4432 or 4423 and not 15-17 points. It's nonsense of course, but that's what it is. And it most certainly is not Acol. Sacrilege. What would John G or Sheila or Dave say?

I have asked (and put in the news-sheet) that Dutch players should not say that they play Acol when asked at our club. *They do not*. Acol is a street in North London where the system was invented. Can't the Dutch think up a name for their *totally* different system? Rotterdam?

(B) An opening suit bid at the 3 level is certainly a pre-empt, but higher bids need to be discussed: -

4♣/♦ If you play these as natural then they are pre-empts. Remember this hand from last week's news-sheet (♠K8 ♥ - ♦1082 ♣AKQJ9872)? Hans actually opened it with a gambling 3NT. That's maybe OK if you agree that an outside king is acceptable, but I believe that most who play that an outside king is OK would not make the bid with an 8 card suit and such a king – the hand is then far too strong for a pre-empt. However, when discussing the hand Hans said that if 3NT was not an option he would open 4♣. Now I think that that is a terrible bid; you have gone past 3NT which may well be the best spot. This is a big hand (way too good for any pre-empt) and a 1♣ opening seems obvious to me, close to 2♣! So, I don't really like to open 4♣/♦ in the natural sense (I prefer Namyats – I'll cover this at a later date); but if you do, I recommend that the hand should not contain the ace of the suit as 3NT may then easily be a good contract if partner has a smidgeon of points.

4♥/♠ Now these are Pre-empts of a sort. But since they are at the game level they may well be a very respectable hand, they certainly could have opening values or better. If you interchange the ♥'s and ♦'s in Jeff's East hand then a 4♥ bid would have been quite acceptable – and Chuck most certainly would not have doubled a 4♥ or 4♠ bid.

5♣/♦ Pre-emptive. But again, I would be wary of making these bid if 3NT (or slam!) could be a makeable final contract.

5♥/5♠ Now you could agree to play these as pre-emptive but there's another sensible alternative. Consider ♠ - ♥QJ1098762 ♦AK ♣AKQ, what do you open? It seems sensible to me to open 5♥, partner then knows that only top ♥ honours are of any significance and he should raise a level for each top ♥ (AKQ) honour held regardless of the rest of the hand.

6♣/♦/♥/♠ Pre-emptive? Possibly, bid 6♣ with ♠ - ♥ 43 ♦ AK ♣ QJ10987654 ?

But how about: - ♠ - ♥AKQ ♦A ♣AQJ1098765, a 6♣ opening bid is certainly a sensible bid - as long as partner knows what's going on and bids 7♣ with a top ♣ honour regardless. Either is quite playable, up to you. The problem with having these very high pre-empts with hands that have a lot of trick making potential is that the hand may belong to you and you are also pre-empting partner.

(C) Precisely. A double jump or more after opponents open (1♣ - 4♦), this is normally played as pre-emptive by most players (but apparently not all!). At least we agree on something.

(D) *'The bid should show the required number of playing tricks minus two when vulnerable and minus three when non-vulnerable'*. This is a recommendation rather than a rule. Pre-empt are getting weaker and weaker as the years go by (Marty Bergen probably has a lot to do with it).

(E) In a recent **international** match South opened 3♥ with ♠95 ♥Q10873 ♦652 ♣J102 in 3rd seat at favourable vulnerability. Now I would not really recommend this (please don't do it at our club) but the modern trend is certainly towards very weak (unsound?) pre-empts. A far cry from the Hans/Jeff bids. Another reason for this silly bid is the 'silly' rules that are applied to weak twos but not weak threes. I will go into this at a later date.

(F) I agree. Once you have pre-empted, never bid again unless partner invites.

(G) Now here we get down to the nitty-gritty. A pre-empt should be capable of making a reasonable number of tricks and the 'rules of 2,3,4' (refer to the 2004 year-book) give a guide as to how many playing tricks a pre-empt should have. 7 is quite reasonable at the 4 level as Hans states. But the hand should be weak in high cards, i.e. not an opening hand if the pre-empt is not a game bid. Consider ♠AK ♥A ♦8765432 ♣A109, this has a 7 card suit and 7 or so playing tricks, so open or overcall 3 or 4♦? Perhaps if Hans or Jeff are your partner, but otherwise you will quickly run out of partners.

Now this is the point that some people apparently fail to realise. The pre-empt should have the playing strength from the long suit, most certainly not from outside aces and kings. Hands that have opening values should not pre-empt *below the game level*.

And there is one notable omission from Hans' list of criteria for a pre-empt, and I know that it is one that Hans is *most* insistent upon – do not pre-empt with a decent 4 card major. Did Hans simply forget this, or did the fact that Jeff's hand also had a decent 4 card ♠ suit mean that he conveniently 'forgot' to add this to his list of requirements for a pre-empt?

(H) Now here I certainly have the advantage over Hans. When I first took up Bridge some 35 years ago I was fortunate enough to be taught by experts from the word go. I did not meet poor partners for a few months and so most certainly had not picked up bad habits. I have not picked them up since and have never pre-empted on a hand like this in my life.

(J) I have no doubt that both you and Jeff can give many examples of psyches, see (U).

(K) Now here we come to the crux of the matter. First of all, why did I ask Hans what the bid meant when I already knew the answer and had no intention of bidding? This is most definitely a practice that I do not recommend, however the circumstances were somewhat unusual here. First of all, the rules keep changing and I believe that bids at the 4 level and above need not be alerted (I may well be wrong here, but it is not important). So I knew that Hans most certainly would not alert and tell Chuck the true meaning of the bid. As I said in the article in news sheet 78, Jeff made a similar bid (4♣) with a very strong hand (♠A ♥A10 ♦KJ87 ♣AK6532) just a couple of weeks ago when again playing with Hans. Obviously Jeff considers this jump to the 4 level as a very strong bid, I knew this, and Hans knew this, and Hans knew that I knew this (hence his smile?). When I asked the question I did not need to be told how the bid is generally played (weak), 'everybody' knows that; the question was how does Jeff play it, and the answer to that (which I already knew) was strong, and that is the answer that Hans should have given. As I said, I knew that Hans would not divulge this information to Chuck without prompting and that is why I asked the question in a situation where I normally would not. Hans most certainly knew that Jeff's bid could be as strong as this example hand (19 points!) and Chuck was most certainly entitled to have this information. Hans was duty bound to inform Chuck that the bid may be very strong. He absolutely failed to do so. This is mis-information and would be punished severely by any director less lenient than me. More of this later.

South (me), of course, had no terrible decision to make; except that I knew that Chuck would erupt at the end of the hand and then something would have to be done.

And there was nothing devious behind the double. It simply showed an above average hand. Not strictly penalties but usually passed.

- (L) Chuck's decision to double was certainly his own, it may or may not be dubious, but that is not the issue. If Chuck had the information that he was entitled to have (that East had a strong hand) then he most certainly would not have doubled. If I were sitting North and Chuck South then there would have been an entirely different outcome as I would certainly have passed, not because I am any better at bidding than Chuck, nor because Chuck's bid was unwise (it was perfectly acceptable under the circumstances as he understood them), but because I knew that Jeff had a strong hand. As for Chuck's partner (me) promising nothing; that is true, but with a proper pre-empt on Chuck's left and silence on his right, is in normal to expect partner to have some values.
- (M) Chuck and myself certainly feel that there was a 'hidden' agreement. Hans knew that his partner's bid was strong. The fact that he did not take advantage of this by openly cheating and bidding game is commendable (but there would have been absolutely no problem if he had informed everybody that the bid was strong and then bid game). But the issue is the fact that 3 people at the table knew exactly what was going on and Chuck was left in the dark. I tried to make it easy for Hans by asking my question, but he chose to deliberately mis-lead Chuck. And as for the level of E-W, Hans is apparently a very experienced player of a high level. Jeff has finished first at the Club (often in harness with Alex) on numerous occasions. Hans has played with Jeff on many occasions. There is no doubt at all that they are both well above the beginner's stage and knew what they were doing.
- (N) I totally agree. If Chuck was given the true meaning of East's bid then Jeff would most certainly have been punished by a pass from Chuck. But the point is not Jeff's appalling bid, but the inability of his partner to explain that the bid was strong when he most certainly knew this to be the case.
- (P) I agree that it is best not to ask questions if the answer is not going to influence your bid. The only reason I asked is that I believe that Chuck was entitled to know about your partnership understanding that the bid was strong; and I was sure that you would not inform him without being prompted. I believe that the 'smart' thing to do is to answer questions correctly when asked.
- (Q) Chuck's 'bad' decision was based on bad information. It most certainly was not influenced by my question. Chuck is a player of the highest integrity and certainly knows the rules and that any inference that could possibly be obtained by a question of his partner's is 'unauthorised information'. I suspect that he is a little grieved at the fact that Hans would even suggest this? One is not allowed to let any question (or answer to an opponent's question) by partner affect your bidding. And suggesting that Chuck is 'just human'? Well, really! Was Clark Kent 'just human'?
- (R) I agree that Jeff's 4♦ bid is totally legal. You can, by and large, play whatever you like. You could choose to play an opening bid of 4♦ as a strong bid and game forcing if you wish. *But the opponents are entitled to know.* The culprit here was not Jeff and most certainly not me or Chuck. The whole mess was caused by Hans not informing the opponents about his partner's bid as he was obliged to do. A 'referee' should most certainly know this.

(S) As for both parties agreeing to a change of score; I would think the opposite, that both parties would hardly ever agree. That is why the director has to arbitrate and *he* decides upon any adjustment. And while we are on the subject, I know that my ruling of awarding an average to both parties was incorrect; I did it in an attempt not to upset anybody too much (impossible, I know). The correct ruling, of course, is that Jeff should be warned that this bid is normally pre-emptive. But the main thing is that Hans was totally at fault by giving mis-information. He would have been given a severe reprimand in any other environment, warned and fined. The score would most certainly have been reset to 4♦ making +1 undoubled, it most certainly would not be a 'split score'.

(U) Finally Hans says '*Jeff is absolutely not misleading people*'. Really?

Making a 'pre-emptive' bid with ♠ A ♥ A10 ♦ KJ87 ♣ AK6532 ?

This most certainly is not a hand to pre-empt in my view. Presumably it would be OK in Hans' definition because it is around 7 playing tricks, but it is unfortunately only a 6 card suit. Misleading? And how about opening 1♣ and then rebidding ♣'s with ♠ AJ98 ♥ QJ75 ♦ A96 ♣ 104 ?

With this last hand the complete bidding was 1♣ - 2NT - 3♣ - 3NT. I can think of no logical reason for rebidding a 2 card suit other than to inhibit the lead against the obvious expected final 3NT contract, can you? One may call this misleading **at best**. It is, as suggested by Chuck, a psyche (do you agree Hans?). But then I have no doubt that Hans' definition of a psyche is far removed from mine or Chuck's? Jeff bid this against Chuck and Chuck called me over. I said to forget it. I certainly will not next time and Jeff will receive an adjusted (unfavourable) score no matter what his partner thinks.

Looks like Hans and myself even disagree on the definition of the word misleading?

These two examples make it perfectly clear that Jeff is 'absolutely' misleading people. The only question is, is he doing it deliberately or is it just that he does not have a clue? I will always give somebody the benefit of the doubt, so my view up to now was that he is clueless. Chuck has a more down to earth approach - somebody with years of experience and who repeatedly comes top in the club tournament cannot be clueless. So which is it, Hans? Either way it's misleading!

The bottom lines: - At least I have learned one thing from Hans' story – he considers himself an A-line player who knows the rules. Fine. Now Chuck frequently calls the director when there has been an infraction, and that is what one should do as Hans correctly pointed out at (T). Chuck is, of course, usually right; but I tend to be lenient towards the opponents as the standard at our club is not very high and people naturally tend to make mistakes. I tend to try to shield them from Chuck who may seem somewhat intimidating to the less experienced players. But I will certainly no longer do so with Hans or Jeff. They will get what the rules dictate (so in this case not an average but 4♦ making +1 undoubled, so a bottom).

The rules will be strictly applied to both Hans and Jeff from now on. This also includes a penalty for failure to count the cards before looking at them. Playing out a hand with 14 or 12 cards is inexcusable. The rules are *very* clear here. And I don't really appreciate an 'ex-referee' criticising me when I did not allow a board to be played out after the bidding was completed and then one player discovered that he had 15 cards and another just 11! The rules are also clear here, both culprits should have been fined and the board certainly not played.

So, Hans and myself totally disagree on just about everything (what a surprise). Now it's little old me against Hans with all of his exams and experience in Holland; only one of us can possibly be right, I'll leave it up to you to decide who.

Just one final point. If there are individual(s) who think that I am doing a bad job of running the club, then why not show us how it should be done? I have said this before, I am more than willing to lend out my equipment (free of charge) to anybody who wants to set up a club on another day. Nothing would please me more that to be able to have a quiet game of bridge with a partner I get on with (yes, there are 1 or 2) and not have to worry about all the aspects of being the director. So give it a go? But perhaps it's simply easier to criticise me?

I think that 8 pages is quite enough to explain Hans' and my differing views on these topics (but hasn't it been fun?), so let's have some Bridge: -

What's the rebid?

Board 27 from Monday 17th, love all

West (F)	East	<u>Table A</u>			
		West	North	East	South
♠ A85	♠ KJ9743	-	-	-	pass
♥ AQ1043	♥ 75	1♥ (1)	pass	1♠ (2)	pass
♦ A	♦ Q10842	3♣ (3)	pass	3♠ (4)	pass
♣ AQ64	♣ -	4♠ (5)	all pass		

<u>Table B</u>			
West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
1♥ (1)	2♣	2♠ (6)	pass
4♠ (7)	all pass		

Table A: This table bid very sensibly to the top spot.

(1) So what would you open? Unlike a 1NT opener it is allowed (but I don't usually recommend it) to open 2NT with a singleton, preferably an ace or king, sometimes there really is no other sensible opening. But his hand has two good suits and is easy to bid naturally, so 1♥ is best. Even if you play strong twos this hand has points, but not the required playing strength for a strong two.

(2) An obvious 1♠ response.

(3) Showing the 2nd suit. This is known as a high reverse (the 2nd bid is at the 3 level) and it is game forcing.

(4) There is no need to show the ♦ suit when you have a 6 card ♠ suit. Anyway, 3♦ here would be the 4th suit and would only complicate matters. 3NT, with a void and a reasonable 6 card major would be a lousy bid.

(5) Knowing that East probably has a 6 card ♠ suit, West is happy to support.

Table B: This time there was interference, but very sensible bidding again.

(6) After the overcall the response has to be at the two level. It does not really have the values for a two level response and some may prefer a negative double. But with two decent suits, tolerance for partner's suit and a *useful* void, I think it's sensible to show the long suit. Sometimes you have to overbid slightly when the opponents interfere. A negative double would only promise 4 ♠'s whereas the 2♠ bid promises 5+.

(7) North's overcall has taken away West's natural rebid, but he has no problem as East's bid guarantees a 5 card suit and a jump to 4♠ is the correct bid (you could choose to bid 3♣, the opponent's suit; but I prefer 4♠, it's simpler). This sequence illustrates why it is important that a major suit response at the two level must guarantee a 5(+) card suit – opener must be free to support with just 3 cards.

And what happened? 3 tables reached 4♠, one making and the other two +1. But one table managed to bid to the poor 4♥ contract, I've no idea how.

Blackwood with a weak suit?

Board 10 from Friday 21st, both vul.

North South (G)

♠ J10 ♠ 53
♥ Q2 ♥ AKJ109854
♦ KJ963 ♦ A108
♣ AKQJ ♣ -

Table A:

West	North	East	South
pass	1♦	pass	1♥ (1)
pass	2NT (2)	pass	4NT (3)
pass	6NT (4)	all pass	

Table B:

West	North	East	South
pass	1♦	pass	2♥ (5)
pass	4♥ (6)	pass	4NT (7)
pass	5♦	pass	6♥

These two tables landed in a poor slam, what went wrong? all pass

Table A: 1♥ at (1) is fine, but 2♥ is the best bid if you play strong jump shifts (standard). It shows a very good suit and is game forcing. Anyway, 1♥ is fine, but what about 2NT at (2)? 18-19 (17-19 if you play a weak NT), so OK? With this weak doubleton ♠ and excellent 2nd suit, I would prefer to bid ♣'s; so either 2♣ or 3♣, depending upon your style. South's 4NT at (3) was intended as Blackwood, North took it as quantitative. I've been over this a few times; I prefer to play 4♣ Gerber when partner's last bid was 2NT and 4NT as a quantitative raise, but it's up to each individual partnership. Anyway, that is not the real problem as a one ace reply does not really help (is it the ♠A or the ♣A?). The solution is below.

Table B: This time South chose 2♥ at (5) which should make the auction easier. Since the auction is game forcing North could bid 3♣ at (6), but with the ♥Qx of ♥'s I would prefer 3♥ opposite partner's advertised excellent suit. The poor slam was also reached when South bid Blackwood at (7).

At the other two tables North bid either 2♣ or 3♣ at (2); since South did not like this 2nd suit he simply jumped to 4♥ and a slam was not investigated. Now I have said that I don't like 2NT at (2) or 4♥ at (6); but suppose that South wants to go slamming, is there a way to avoid the slam with two top losers in a suit?

Yes, there are a couple of solutions. Normal Blackwood is never a good idea when you are missing two aces and have a void. If partner responds one ace you have no idea if it is the useful one or the one in your void suit. One method with a void is Exclusion Blackwood, if partner's bid at (6) had been 3♥ then a jump to 5♣ would have been Exclusion Blackwood, asking for aces outside the ♣ suit. However, that is not possible after the 4♥ bid at (6) because 5♣ is now a cue bid (Exclusion Blackwood is always a *jump* to the 5 level).

But anyway, any sort of Blackwood is unwise when you have a weak suit which partner has not bid (the ♠'s in this example). The South hand simply should not bid Blackwood at all, but cuebid 5♣ at (7) (4♣ if North had bid 3♥). This shows 1st round control, is looking for slam, and invites partner to cue bid a 1st round control in return. Note that the 5♣ cuebid has denied the ♠A; if North had the ♠A he would cue bid it, so without it or the ♦A he bids 5♥. This is a simple variation of a cuebidding style and is what you do when Blackwood is unwise.

And what happened? Both slams went down. The bottom lines?

- Don't use Blackwood with a void.
- Don't use Blackwood with a weak suit (no ace or king) that partner has not bid.
- Agree with your partner when to use Gerber or Blackwood.
- Try cuebidding as a prelude/alternative to Blackwood when appropriate.

Does it show 4 or 5 cards?

Board 12 from Friday 21st,
N-S vul

North (H) South

♠ K1085 ♠ A72
♥ Q1072 ♥ K94
♦ AJ ♦ KQ96
♣ 943 ♣ AK6

Table A

West	North	East	South
pass	pass	pass	2NT (1)
pass	3♣	pass	3♦
pass	3NT	all pass	

Table B

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

Table C

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

3NT is the best contract, so what went wrong at table C? -

Table A: This table got to the correct contract but I don't like the opening bid. 2NT is generally played as 20-21 (or 20-22) points. This hand, with its totally flat 4333 type shape is only worth 18 (deduct one for the shape).

Table B: This table got it right, but should North have bid 3♠ at (3) or did South's 2NT deny 4♠'s?

Table C: This North was not sure and so bid 3♠ at (3). Unfortunately South assumed that this showed 5♥'s and so he quite reasonably bid 4♥.

So then, does 2NT at (2) deny 4♠'s? (what did you bid with Hand C in this week's quiz?). And does 3♠ at (3) show 5♥'s? Let's start with the 2NT bid. You can play that 2NT denies 4♠'s but then you would have to jump to 2♠ when you hold 4♠'s. Quite playable, and this is what many players would do with 18-19 points and a 4 card ♠ suit. But I personally would prefer a more shapely hand (5 or 6 ♣'s). With my preferred style the 2NT bid may have a 4 card ♠ suit. So what does partner do? He cannot bid 3♠ as then opener has no idea if he has 4 or 5♥'s. The solution is that you have to play Checkback Stayman (or New Minor Forcing); 3♣ at (3) is artificial and asks opener to bid 3♥ with 3♥'s or 3♠ with 4♠'s, else 3NT (or 3♦).

Checkback Stayman (or New Minor Forcing) is also used after 1NT rebid. It is a very useful convention but perhaps better left to the more experienced players. In this particular situation I think it's best to jump to 2♠ rather than 2NT when you have a 4 card ♠ suit if you do not play Checkback Stayman.

One final point. Suppose that you do play Checkback Stayman, then what does the 3♠ bid promise in the auction 1♦ - 1♥ - 2NT - 3♠? Since with 5♥'s and/or 4♠ one bids Checkback this bid can only show 4♠'s and 6!♥'s.

The bottom line. Be very wary of 'reversing' without reversing shape. Although North's 3♠ here at (3) does not show extra values after South's strong bid, I would take it as showing more♥'s than♠'s. And indeed, if you play Checkback, then showing 6♥'s!

Bidding in the balancing Seat

Board 21 from Friday 21st

Dealer: ♠ AQ4
 North ♥ K9543
 N-S vul ♦ J10753
 ♣ -

♠ K72	N	♠ 10963
♥ 107	W E	♥ AQJ2
♦ A	S	♦ Q84
♣ AKQ10972		♣ J4

♠ J85
 ♥ 86
 ♦ K962
 ♣ 8653

Table A

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

Table B

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

Table C

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	pass	pass
2♣ (1)	pass (4)	pass (5)	pass

Table D

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	pass	pass
3♣ (1)	pass	pass (6)	pass

The board was played 4 times and nobody found the excellent 3NT.

Table A: A big hand, so double at (1)? I guess that a double followed by bidding ♣'s is OK, but there are actually better bids as we shall see. Anyway, what about East's 2♠ bid? It is a free bid (after North's 2♦ bid East can pass without values and so a free bid is around 6-10 points). Of course one never denies a 4 card major and West normally has ♠'s when he doubles ♥'s and so 2♠ here is fine. And West's raise to 4♠? Now this I do not like. I said that double at (1) is acceptable if you follow it up with a ♣ bid; this may well be a Moysian ♠ fit and 3NT could easily be the best contract. I would not be in this situation (I would not have doubled) but 3♣ is the best bid now and partner would undoubtedly bid 3NT, the top spot.

Table B: So bid 2♣ at (1)? No, it's too good. And what I said about the above auction is largely applicable to this one.

Table C: And of course it's nearly as bad to play in just 2♣. North's decision not to compete at (4) worked very well. East should bid 2♠ at (5).

Table D: Now a couple of players asked me about this one. You play weak jump overcalls, so this is 3♣ at (1) weak? No! There is no such thing as a weak bid in the pass-out seat. Whether you generally play weak jump overcalls or not this is strong (or intermediate). This is what I would bid with most partners. East will then obviously not pass (knowing that it is not weak) but the other implications of the bid make life easier; when West jumps in ♣'s this shows a good hand and a good suit and generally denies interest in a major suit contract – the emphasis being on NT or possibly a ♣ slam. East should then not bother with his ♠ suit but bid 3NT.

Now I said that I would bid 3♣ at (1) with most players, but Chuck came up with the best bid. In these situations a jump cue bid (so 3♥ here at (1)) has a very specific meaning – it tells partner to bid 3NT if he has the suit stopped (and implies a good long solid minor) as described in news-sheet 61. 3NT is then easy for East. What happened? 4♠ went –1 twice and the ♣ contracts made overtricks.

Opening twos in 4th seat.

And a word about opening bids in 4th seat. Now it is possible to write a whole book on bidding in the pass-out seat (indeed, Ron Klinger has) but I'll just mention two-level openers.

There is no point in opening with any bid in 4th seat unless you expect a plus score, so weak 2♦/♥/♠ are out. What should these bids mean? There are a few sensible options. One is to play them as 'weak' twos, but with a higher point range, say 9-12. But I would be very wary of opening a 'weak' 2♦ or 2♥ in 4th seat without good ♠'s. Probably a better solution, unless you play Benjamin, is to play them as strong.

A Comfortable Slam Missed

Board 14 from Monday 17th, love all.

West (D)

East

♠ J2

♠ K

♥ A543

♥ KQJ1062

♦ AJ865

♦ K2

♣ 72

♣ AK104

Table A:

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

Table B:

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

Table C:

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♥	pass
4♥ (1)	pass	pass (2)	all pass

There are an easy 12 tricks.

So where did it go wrong? I don't like the bidding at any of the tables: -

Table A: This West decided that it would be best to show his ♦'s before supporting ♥'s. This is fine if you have a game going hand (bidding 4♥ after a simple rebid from opener is a delayed game raise, showing a sound raise to 4♥). But this West hand is only invitational and a subsequent invitational 3♥ bid shows just 3 card ♥ support.

Table B: This West did not like his hand as much and bid just 2♥. East's raise to 4♥ at (2) is then obvious.

Table C: This West again fancied his hand and so bid game straightaway at (1). Unfortunately this is played as a weak pre-emptive raise and so East quite correctly passed at (2).

So which West was right and how should the hand be bid?

Actually, none of the West's got it right; the correct bid at (1) is an invitational 3♥. This shows 10-12 points; with 4 card support, two aces, a decent 5 card suit and two doubletons this hand is worth 3♥. East would then simply ask for aces and then bid 6♥.

There is another solution if you play Benjamin or strong twos. This East hand is worth a strong two bid and then 6♥ should be easily reached.

And what happened? These 3 E-W's actually shared the top as nobody bid slam and the N-S pair at the 4th table found a 5♠ sacrifice that went four down but was not doubled!

The bottom lines. If you have an invitational hand, then invite! When you have an invitational hand with 4 card support for partner's major, bid an invitational 3♥/♠ directly. Raising partner's major directly to 4 is a weak bid and does not suggest looking for slam. If you bid freely to game and the opponents sacrifice at the 5 level, then double them!

Lead top of a (near) sequence

Board 11 from Monday 17th,

Dealer:	♠ A6	West	North	East	South
South	♥ K63	-	-	-	pass
Love all	♦ 10975	1♦	pass (1)	1NT (2)	pass
	♣ AK75	3NT (3)	all pass		
♠ K843	N	♠ QJ52			
♥ Q74	W E	♥ 952			
♦ AJ84	S	♦ KQ			
♣ Q8		♣ 10432			
	♠ 1097				
	♥ AJ108				
	♦ 632				
	♣ J96				

3NT is obviously a silly contract that went 2 down, let's look at the bidding: -

First of all, what would you do with the North hand at (1)? It's a reasonable 14 count, so not quite good enough for 1NT (15-18). With no 5 card suit pass would also be my choice. And what about East's 1NT at (2). Anybody who reads the news-sheets knows that 1♠ is correct. This East player does not bother to read the news-sheets and so will presumably continue to miss 4-4 major suit fits. 3NT at (3) promises a much better hand, I believe that this West was confused.

Anyway, the reason I included this hand was not the bidding (we all know not to deny a 4 card major and that this 3NT bid promises 19+ points or preferably a good long suit) but the opening lead. What do you lead from the South hand? He quite reasonably chose a ♥, but which one? He led a 4th best ♥ 8, dummy played low and North was in a spot. Should he play low and thus keep the king sitting over the queen or should he pop up with the king which would make life easy for declarer if he holds the ace. The answer is that North should never have been put in this predicament; the correct lead from the South hand is the ♥ J, top of an internal (near) sequence.

What happened? N-S eventually came to just one ♥ trick instead of 4 off the top and so the contract went just two down with East thus salvaging an average score. And other tables? 2♠ was reached twice but one E-W pair managed to play in a silly 2♦ going -3.

Transfer!

Board 10 from Monday 17th, both vul.

North (B) South

♠ A83 ♠ J542
♥ Q8642 ♥ AJ
♦ 83 ♦ A92
♣ 963 ♣ KQJ8

Table A:

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

Table B:

West	North	East	South
-	-	pass	1NT
pass	2♦ (1)	pass	2♥
all pass			

We all know to transfer with a 5 card major, don't we?

Table A: This pair most certainly play transfers. Why a *very* experienced player (indeed, one who often criticises other players in the club) does not realise that one should transfer with hands like this is beyond me.

Table B: This, of course, is how the hand should be bid.

What happened? 2♥ was bid twice and made +1 for the joint top. 2♠ was bid once and made exactly, the booby prize went to our intrepid experts who played in 1NT just making.

The bottom line. When you have a weak hand and a 5 card major opposite partner's 1NT opening, transfer! You may end up in a 5-2, 5-3, 5-4 or even 5-5 fit, but even a 5-2 fit will usually play better than 1NT as dummy is useless in a NT contract. Indeed, this hand is a perfect example, it's a 5-2 fit ♥ but made 2 more tricks in ♥'s than in NT. And I don't think that people who do not understand this and bid like Table A are really qualified to continually criticise everybody? Agreed?

Counting Cards

Now here I am not concerned with keeping track during play, only Hans and Chuck do that, but what one should do at the start of every hand. The rules (and common sense) are very clear here. Remove the cards from the board and count them, face down, **before you look at them**. I did a survey on Friday: -

Alex, Dave, Bob, Richard (UK), Kenneth, Wendy, John G, John, and Sheila all passed with 100% and counted their hand face down. Hans was not quite perfect but usually did so. Chuck was, I'm afraid to say, only about 50%. The others (Ian, Richard (US), Kees, Jan and Mike) failed totally and always looked at their hand and then either counted or not – but it's too late! If you look at your hand and discover that you have too many cards, then the rules clearly state that you should be penalised! If you play the hand with 12 or 14 cards then that really is silly. I think that it should be drinks all round if anybody does this again, agreed?

Now I realise that a 'procedural penalty' means nothing at our club (who really cares if they end up 5% or 10% behind Chuck?) but it really does make life easier (especially for me, and that's what *counts* – excuse the pun). So please obey the rules and count your cards before looking at them.

I can even recall one distinguished player (Chuck of course) playing out a hand whilst sitting on (literally) the ♦A! I was asked to adjudicate if there had been a revoke!

Over the top – part 1Board 23 from Monday 17th, both vul

North	South (J)	West	North	East	South
♠ 10983	♠ 752	-	-	-	1♥
♥ AJ	♥ KQ743	pass	1♠	pass	2♠ (1)
♦ A1096	♦ KQ54	pass	4♠ (2)	all pass	
♣ Q95	♣ K				

4♠ went two down for a bottom, what went wrong? The first two bids are obvious but what is your rebid at (1)? North's 1♠ bid only promises 4 cards; it is often correct to support with just three cards, especially with a singleton. But with this South hand I would rebid 2♦ because: the ♠ suit is so poor, the ♦ suit is very respectable and the singleton is a king.

And North's jump to 4♠ at (2)? With just 11 points and no ♠ honours 3♠ is quite sufficient if you want to raise ♠'s. But actually the best bid is either 2NT or 3NT: -

If you feel that the North hand has only invitational values then bid 2NT– showing just 4 trumps and offering 2NT or 3NT as alternative contracts. And if you feel that the North hand, with its excellent intermediates is worth game, then 3NT at (2) is the bid.

And what happened? 4♠ went two down and was the only –ve score for N-S.

The bottom line. It's nice to have at least one honour in the trump suit between the two hands when you are at the game level. A 4-3 fit with no trump honours will not play well.

Over the top – part 2Board 24 from Monday 17th, both vul

North (K)	South (A)	West	North	East	South
♠ J8	♠ A10532	pass	pass	pass	1♠
♥ AJ75	♥ 9	pass	1NT	pass	3NT (1)
♦ 108432	♦ KQ	all pass			
♣ Q8	♣ AK962				

It's the same pair on the very next board!

3NT went down, anything wrong? Yes. When you open 1♠ and partner responds 1NT you need a good hand to raise. The raise to 2NT is about 17-18 points and 3NT is 19-20. This South hand is a decent 16 points with two 5 card suits – but the ♦KQ are bad and the singleton ♥ is not good for no trumps. This hand is not even good enough to raise to 2NT and should simply bid 2♣ over partner's 1NT. North should then give preference back to 2♠ and that's a very decent spot.

What happened? Only Kenneth/David reached 2♠ and that was the only + score and so an outright top. All of the other 3 pairs reached 3NT and went one or two down.

The bottom line. After 1♥/♠ - 1NT, 2NT is 17-18 pts, 3NT is 19+.

Incidentally, these ranges are not my concoction but are generally agreed as best. You will occasionally miss games when responder has 9 points and opener has 15 or 16 (but if you bid 2NT with just 16 points you will be in trouble if responder has just 6) – the higher your opening bid, the more difficult it is for responder and the 1NT response to 1♥/♠ can mean virtually anything.

This possibly missing game is not generally a problem with the strong NT as all balanced 15-16 point hands will have opened 1NT. It is, however, a problem when you play the weak NT. That's just one reason why I do not like to play 4 card majors. I personally feel that you should only open a 4 card major if you have 17+ points (so that you can raise a 1NT response) but that is not an established system as far as I know.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: 2♣. Not good enough for 2NT (17-18 points) or 3♣ which is game forcing. I suspect that some European/British players may have chosen 3♣? But this is generally played a game forcing by most players and this hand is no good enough.
- Hand B: 2♦, a transfer. Do not pass, your 5 card suit will play much better as trumps, even if declarer turns up with just two of them.
- Hand C: (a) 1♣. Nowhere good enough for 2NT which is 20-21 or 20-22.
(b) 2NT or 2♠? Which? The answer is that it is up to your partnership understanding. I would recommend 2♠ if you do not play Checkback Stayman over 2NT.
- Hand D: 3♥. A little too good for 2♥. Not good enough for 2♦ followed by 4♥. 4♥ directly is a weaker hand with (usually) 5 ♥'s and I would never bid 4♥ with two aces. 2♦ followed by 3♥ shows just 3 card support.
- Hand E: 3♣ or 3♥. The hand is too good for a simple 2♣ overcall. I don't like to double 1♥ with just 4 ♠'s. I guess that double is reasonable if you intend to bid ♣'s over partner's anticipated ♠ response, but it's simplest to bid 3♣ now, this is not a weak bid in the pass out seat. 3♥ is another option, it asks partner to bid 3NT with a ♥ stop.
- Hand G: 5♣. A cue bid. Bidding Blackwood is not recommended when you have a weak doubleton or if you have a void.
- Hand F: (a) 1♥. This is better than 2NT because you have an easy (3♣) rebid.
(b) 4♠. LHO has 'stolen' your rebid, but partner's response at the two level promises a 5+ card suit and so you can support at the game level with only 3 cards. There are other options (such as a 3♣ cuebid) but 4♠ keeps it simple.
- Hand H: The answer depends upon your partnership style.
If your partner will never rebid 2NT with a 4 card ♠ suit but will bid 2♠ instead then obviously you bid 3NT.
But what do you do if your style is for opener to rebid 2NT with 4333, 4243 or similar shape (4 ♠'s)? Obviously this is a very sensible style, but it is bypassing a 4 card major and if your partnership does this then you have to subsequently find a possible 4-4 ♠ fit. So should this hand bid 3♠ now? No! This cannot work because partner will then not know if you have a 5 card ♥ suit or just 4. If you adopt this style of bidding 2NT even with 4 ♠'s, then you also have to play Checkback Stayman (or New Minor forcing). If this all seems a bit alien/advanced to you then don't bypass the 4 card major.
- Hand J: 2♦. At least that is what I would bid in preference to 2♠. It is often wise to support partner with 3 card support and a singleton, but in this case the support is miserable, the singleton is pretty good and the ♦'s are a decent 2nd suit.
- Hand K: 2♠. Simple preference back to partner's first suit. This does not show any extra values. 2♦ or 2♥ would show a weak hand but with a 6+ card suit. If you chose 2NT then you need to have a word with me after standing in the corner.