

18/3/2005

Club News Sheet – No. 124

Mon 14/3/05	1 st Ken/Jean Charles	58%	2 nd Bob/Dave	56%
Wed 16/3/05	1 st Jan/Tom	57%	2 nd David(Swe)/Jean Charles	56%
Fri 18/3/05	1 st Jan/Tom	61%	2 nd Bob/Dave	61%

Bidding Quiz

Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A RHO opens 1♦. (a) what do you bid? (b) Suppose you choose to double, then what do you do when partner jumps to 2♠?
♠ J75 ♥ AK102 ♦ Q62 ♣ KJ7	♠ KQJ43 ♥ 9 ♦ K53 ♣ 10654	
Hand C	Hand D	(a) What do you open with Hand C? (b) Suppose you open 1♣, then what do you bid after partner's 1♠ response?
♠ 6 ♥ KJ75 ♦ A642 ♣ AK97	♠ AK76 ♥ AQ52 ♦ KJ4 ♣ K9	With Hand D RHO opens 1♣. (a) What do you bid? (b) Suppose you double and partner bids 1♦, what now? (c) Suppose you double and partner bids 1♠, what now?
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E partner opens 2♠ and RHO doubles. What do you do? With Hand F you open 1NT and partner bids 2♣, Stayman. You respond 2♥ (of course) and he then bids 3NT. What do you do?
♠ Q1085 ♥ 10 ♦ K1097 ♣ Q1065	♠ 10863 ♥ AQ53 ♦ KQJ ♣ KJ	
Hand G	Hand H	With Hand G you open 1♥ and partner responds 1♠. You then bid 2♣ and partner bids 2♥. What do you do now? (a) With Hand H partner opens 1♥, what do you bid? (b) Suppose you bid 1♠ and partner bids 2♣, what now?
♠ AQ8 ♥ Q10632 ♦ - ♣ KQ832	♠ KJ106 ♥ 85 ♦ AJ1074 ♣ 106	
Hand J	Hand K	What do you open with Hand J? With Hand K partner opens 1♣, what do you bid?
♠ AKQJ6432 ♥ 4 ♦ Q5 ♣ 98	♠ KQ2 ♥ J93 ♦ AQ107 ♣ 953	
Hand L	Hand M	What do you open with Hand L? What do you open with Hand M?
♠ AKQJ764 ♥ KQ ♦ Q4 ♣ 95	♠ AJ92 ♥ AK987 ♦ A ♣ KQ10	

Lead partner's suit (if declarer has yours)

Board 6 from Monday 14th

Dealer:	♠ KQ2				
East	♥ J93	West	North(K)	East	South
E-W vul	♦ AQ107	-	-	pass (1)	1♣ (2)
	♣ 953	pass	2NT (3)	all pass	
♠ J53	N	♠ A86			
♥ A10875	W E	♥ 42			
♦ J95	S	♦ K6432			
♣ 82		♣ AJ6			
	♠ 10974				
	♥ KQ6				
	♦ 8				
	♣ KQ1074				

- (1) A borderline opener, but with nice top cards I would open with 1♦ as it conforms with the rule of 20 and has good top cards.
- (2) Another borderline opener, but with nice shape, touching honours (good), two useful 10's and an easy rebid I too would open this hand although it's only 19 (for the rule of 20).
- (3) What did you bid with this North hand K in this week's quiz? A balanced 11-12 points and (of course) no 4 card major and so it's 2NT. Equally good is to bid 1♦ and probably later bid 2NT. Now this brings up an interesting point, in SAYC the direct 2NT response is apparently 13-15, but I have only found one player who plays this. Chuck, Austin, Clive, Dave, and everybody else that I asked all said that 2NT by responder should be 11-12 whenever it is bid, and I totally agree. Keep it simple!

But now we come to the real point – the play. What would you lead from this East hand? North's 2NT bid is very revealing – he has denied a 4 card major and most certainly has a good ♦ suit. I would not lead a ♦ away from the king in this situation.

So what's the alternative? You know that partner has at least 4 ♥'s and I would lead the ♥4. If you can't lead your suit, then lead partner's (presumed) suit. With this actual layout this lead will not gain anything – but it will not give a trick away!

And what happened? West led the ♦3 and North made 10 tricks. This was a good score for N-S but was beaten by the N-S pair who defended 1NT by East and got just 8 tricks. Isn't the scoring unfair! This 2nd N-S pair made 8 tricks and scored 200 but the 1st N-S pair made 10 tricks but scored just 180!

The bottom line: -
Sometimes the opponent's bidding will reveal partner's suit.

The second double is also take-out – pt 1

Board 13 from Monday 14th

Dealer: ♠ 6
North ♥ 73
both vul ♦ QJ1092
♣ AQ542

♠ AQJ75	N	♠ 10942
♥ KQ42	W E	♥ A98
♦ 8	S	♦ 73
♣ K87		♣ J1063
	♠ K85	
	♥ J1065	
	♦ AK654	
	♣ 9	

Table A

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

Table B

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

Table A: (1) Yet another borderline opener. This ♦ suit is worth more than 3 points and opening certainly is not wrong. But I was North at this table and with this hand type it's usually very easy to describe it later (the infamous UNT) and so I chose to pass.

(2) This 3♦ bid is pre-emptive after an intervening double.

(3) East should bid 3♠ here. Partner's 2nd double is also for take-out.

Table B: (1) This North chose to open, fine.

(4) But here we see the problem with North opening. South expected a little more from North and made a penalty double. Mind you, North has shown a 5+ card ♦ suit and so the ♦ AK are not standing up - 4♦ may be a better bid than double.

And what happened? 3♦ doubled made two overtricks at Table A for the N-S top. And 3♠ doubled made an overtrick at Table B for the E-W top.

The bottom lines: -

- If you double and then double again when LHO raises the suit, the 2nd double is again for take-out.
- In most situations where the opponents have bid and agreed a suit, a double is for take-out.
- If you have a big fit for partner (5-5 or better) then don't expect to make tricks in this suit if you end up defending.

The second double is also take-out – pt 2

Board 15 from Friday 18th

And we had a similar bidding sequence with this deal from Friday.

Dealer:	♠ 92					
South	♥ 9		West	North	East	South
N-S vul	♦ A7532		-	-	-	1♦
	♣ KJ652		pass	3♦ (1)	dbl	4♦
			pass	pass	dbl (2)	pass
			pass (3)	pass		
♠ J764	N	♠ AK1083				
♥ 10432	W E	♥ AKJ876				
♦ 8	S	♦ 64				
♣ Q984		♣ -				
	♠ Q5					
	♥ Q5					
	♦ KQJ109					
	♣ A1073					

- (1) With this great support and a good 2nd suit, this hand is well worth 3♦.
- (2) And as we now all know, this 2nd double is also for take-out.
- (3) But obviously West was sleeping.

And what happened? 4♦ doubled went just one down for 200 away and a top to N-S. One other E-W pair actually let N-S play in 4♦ undoubled (probably just as well as their defence was consistent with their bidding when they let South make 10 tricks). E-W are cold for 12 tricks in either major (if they have read the news-sheets about playing for the drop with 4 out including the queen). E-W played in ♥'s at the other 4 tables but only two of them managed 12 tricks.

The bottom lines: -

- A 2nd double is also for take-out, especially when the opponents have bid and supported the suit.
- A singleton trump is not a good enough holding to convert partner's take-out double into penalties!
- With 9 cards in a suit missing the queen, it's usually best to play for the drop.

Which ace?

Board 9 from Monday 14th

Dealer: ♠ J87642
North ♥ 102
E-W vul ♦ 85
♣ A65

Table A

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

♠ K N ♠ A95
♥ KJ985 W E ♥ AQ74
♦ KQJ10 S ♦ A32
♣ KQ2 ♣ J93
♠ Q103
♥ 63
♦ 9764
♣ 10874

Table B

West North East South
- pass (1) 1NT (4) pass
2♦ pass 2♥ (5) pass
4♣ pass 4NT pass
6NT (6) all pass

- Table A: (1) So would you open this North hand with a weak 2♠? I guess I would not be able to print what Chuck would say (miserable suit, an outside ace etc. etc) but at this vulnerability I think it's OK.
(2) Obviously East should bid here, and either 2NT or double are reasonable. I would double as it's not quite good enough for 2NT.
(3) And this is also wrong as it's not forcing.

- Table B: (1) This North chose to pass, fine
(4) And this auction was fairly typical after North passed. But, of course. I would deduct a point for the flat shape and so not open 1NT.
(5) With 4 good trumps, a super-accept is an alternative option.
(6) A bit of a gamble (which ace is missing). At pairs scoring I guess 6NT is best but at teams then obviously 6♥.

Anyway, most tables reached 6NT but I was asked by one West player if it was possible to establish if East had the ♠ A (he was worried about the singleton king). Let's see how my 'experts' might bid it and also find out if East has the ♥ Q (we'll assume that North passes): -

West North East South
- pass 1♦ (7) pass
1♥ pass 2♥ pass
3♠ (8) pass 4♦ (9) pass
4NT (10) pass 5♣ (11) pass
5♦ (12) pass 5NT (13) pass
6NT (14) all pass

- (7) 15 points, but knock off a point for 4333 type shape and it's not good enough for 1NT.
(8) A splinter, game forcing. Now normally it is not a good idea to splinter with a singleton king, but West wants to establish exactly which aces partner has and the best way to do that is by cue bidding, and an easy way to initiate a cue bidding sequence is to splinter.
(9) A cue bid (♦A). Now one always cue bids the cheapest ace and so this bid denies the ♣A.
(10) RKCB. (11) (zero) or 3 key cards. (12) trump queen?
(13) Yes, but no king (a bid of 5♥ would deny the ♥Q and any other suit bid would show that king + the ♥Q).
(14) Now West knows that the ♥'s are running and that the missing ace is the ♣A and so he can go for the higher scoring 6NT slam.

Nice One Dave!Board 7 from Wednesday 16th

Dealer:	♠ QJ9	West	North	East	South
South	♥ Q10	-	-	-	1NT
both vul	♦ 1054	pass	3NT	all pass	
	♣ AK1087				

♠ K62	N	♠ 8754
♥ K62	W E	♥ 87543
♦ KJ632	S	♦ Q7
♣ 93		♣ 52
	♠ A103	
	♥ AJ9	
	♦ A98	
	♣ QJ64	

This deal appeared in a Swedish news-paper and I included it in Wednesday's hands. The bidding is uninteresting but it's all about the play. West should lead a low ♦ and South takes the 2nd round. Now I could not read the Swedish commentary but I assume the deal is all about a squeeze and/or endplay. South has 8 tricks and needs to safely establish a 9th. Now he could take either major suit finesse, but both fail and he's then down when West cashes his ♦'s.

DUMMY → ♠ QJ9
♥ Q10
♦ 10
♣ A

♠ K6	N	♠ 8754
♥ K6	W E	♥ 875
♦ KJ6	S	♦ -
♣ -		♣ -
	♠ A103	
	♥ AJ9	
	♦ 9	
	♣ -	

South wins the 2nd round of ♦'s and then leads four rounds of ♣'s and we are left with this position. The last ♣ from dummy then puts West under pressure.

Now he does not want to unguard either major suit king and so 'has to' throw a ♦. Declarer then leads a ♦ to West and after cashing the 13th ♦ West is end-played. South does not care who has either of the major suit kings as West's lead must give him his 9th trick. So that all seems foolproof, eh? But not when Dave (West) is defending!

Dave did not want to throw a winning ♦ and he is also not so keen on being end-played. So in this position he bared his ♠ K by throwing the ♠ 6. Declarer had seen Dave discard two ♠'s and so quite reasonably finessed the ♠ K. Down one and a well deserved near top for Dave!

Who would blame South for not taking the 'obvious' ♠ finesse and going for the overtrick! And what happened at the other tables? In Pattaya we got the usual mixed bag of results of course (a difference of 4 tricks in the same contract). Everybody was in 3NT: - making +2 twice, exactly once, down one once and somehow managing to go down two once.

A 4441 type shape (any order) is a problem opening hand in most natural systems. Let's have a look at one that came up on Wednesday which generated considerable debate: -

Dealer:	♠ 6	<u>Table A</u>				
South	♥ KJ75	West	North(C)	East	South	
E-W vul	♦ A642	-	-	-	pass	
	♣ AK97	pass	1♣ (1)	pass	1♠	
		pass	2NT (2)	pass	3♠ (3)	
		pass	pass (4)	pass		
♠ A98	N	♠ 10752				
♥ A862	W E	♥ Q1043				
♦ 1087	S	♦ QJ9	<u>Table B</u>			
♣ Q8		♣ J3	West	North	East	South (B)
	♠ KQJ43		-	-	-	pass
	♥ 9		pass	1♦ (1)	pass	1♠
	♦ K53		pass	2♣ (5)	pass	4♣ (6)
	♣ 10654		etc. to 5♣			

- Table A: (1) And here's the first problem, what do you open? What did you open with this North hand C(a) in this week's quiz? The 4441 type shape is notoriously difficult – that's why some systems adopt a convention (Roman 2♦, or Mini Roman 2♦) specifically for this hand type. Anyway, with no such convention, what do you open? There are all sorts of theories; some say the suit below the singleton (but you cannot here as we play 5 card majors); some say the lowest suit; and others say the 2nd lowest suit. So here it's between 1♣ and 1♦. Neither is perfect but I prefer 1♣.
- (2) And here we see the problem; we have no rebid. What did you rebid with this North hand C(b) in this week's quiz? After the 1♣ opening, 2♣ here is generally a 6 card suit (could be 5), 2♦ would be a reverse promising 5+ ♣'s, 1NT is 12-14 and 2NT is 18-19. So what's the solution? There is none! You have to lie, and if you have to lie it's best to lie about your length in a minor suit and so I would rebid 2♣. But with this particular 15-pointer Dave pointed out that 1NT (12-14) would also be a decent bid as it's only lying by one point and a singleton in partner's suit is a downgrade. I agree. Anyway, this North mistakenly thought that 2NT shows 15-17 (it is 18-19).
- (3) I prefer to play that any bid after an 18-19 2NT is game forcing, and I would expect partner to bid again.
- (4) But N-S landed on their feet when North passed as 3♠ is a decent spot.
- Table B: (1) This North chose 1♦.
- (5) But this time the 2♣ rebid now promises 5+ ♦'s – there's no getting away from the lying!
- (6) What did you bid with this South hand B in this week's quiz? I would bid 2♠; this is generally played as weakish but slightly encouraging. That sums this hand up in a nutshell. I don't understand this South's 4♣ bid (as it's gone past 3NT I would take it as strong, agreeing ♣'s, and looking for slam).

And what happened? 3♠ made exactly and took the top spot. 5♣ went one down and scored badly. Various other contracts (such as 2NT and 3NT) also went down.

And how would I bid the hand? 1♣ - 1♠ - 2♣ - 2♠ - pass;
 and Dave's suggestion would work equally well: 1♣ - 1♠ - 1NT - 2♠ - pass.

Roman 2♦ or Mini Roman 2♦?

As I mentioned earlier there are numerous variations of a 2♦ opening bid that show a 4441 type hand. Now you need to define the point range and two popular variations are:

the Roman 2♦ any 4441 type shape, 15-17 points
or the Mini Roman 2♦ any 4441 type shape, 12-14 points

I won't go into the details, but responder can sign off in 2 of a major (2♥ is pass or correct) or can enquire about opener's shortage – there are numerous variations. Anyway, one member asked me which is the best point range to use.

Now I know of at least one very experienced player who plays a strong NT and also likes to play Mini-Roman; this, in my opinion, is wrong: -

The main problem with this type of shape, as I mentioned on the previous page, is no good rebid (because you have no 5 card suit) and one problem often that occurs is when you cannot rebid 1NT because that would show an incorrect point range.

So the answer is now 'obvious'. If you want to play some sort of Roman 2♦ system, then you should play the Roman 2♦ system that is the same point range as your opening 1NT. Then if you have a 4441 type hand that is outside your opening 1NT you can open your lowest ranking suit and then comfortably rebid NT at the lowest level if partner is inconsiderate enough to bid your singleton.

What to do with a monster when the opponents open?

Board 21 from Wednesday 16th

Dealer: ♠ Q3
North ♥ K98
N-S vul ♦ 1073
♣ AQJ76

Table A

West	North	East(D)	South
-	1♣	2NT (1)	pass
pass (2)	pass		

♠ J1094	N	♠ AK76
♥ 74	W E	♥ AQ52
♦ A85	S	♦ KJ4
♣ 8542		♣ K9
	♠ 853	
	♥ J1063	
	♦ Q962	
	♣ 103	

'Expert' Table

West	North	East(D)	South
-	1♣	dbl (1)	pass
1♠ (3)	pass	3♠ (4)	pass
4♠ (5)	all pass		

Table A: (1) So what did you bid with East hand D(a) in this week's quiz? Now we all know (I hope) that a 1NT overcall is 15-18 points, so that's out. So what do you do with a stronger hand? In the 17th century one would bid 2NT; but these days most players play that as conventional (UNT) and so what you do is double and subsequently bid NT – this shows a hand that was too strong to overcall 1NT.

And, of course, there are additional benefits with this approach: - if partner is bust and responds at the one level then you only have to bid 1NT (instead of 2NT). But another major benefit of doubling rather than the sledgehammer 2NT direct approach is that you learn a little about partner's hand.

(2) Anyway, this West apparently did not understand 2NT or else thought his hand too weak to bid and so passed.

Now 4♠ is a fine contract, so how should it be bid in the 20th century? Actually, I've been all through this recently (news-sheet 121) but it apparently did not sink in everywhere (or else people choose to ignore my writings and then ask me again later where they went wrong in the same situation?). So let's repeat myself yet again: -

'Expert' Table (1) So we should start off with a double with hand D. Fine (with a follow-up bid of 1NT if partner responds 1♦).
(3) 0-8 points, 4+ ♠'s.
(4) But partner's 1♠ response is music to our ears. So what did you bid now with this East hand D(c) in this week's quiz? Now when we were discussing the hand one of our local 'cavemen' said simply 4♠. Now I guess that this might have been right in the in the stone age (or 17th century or in Belgium) but it certainly is not right if you simply apply a little logic. Your double has forced partner to bid and his 1♠ response promises around 0-8 points. You do not want to play in 4♠ if he has zero points; but fortunately you have loads of room to invite game: -
2♠ = invitational and partner should bid 4♠ with 7-8 pts and 3♠ with 5-6 pts.
3♠ = highly invitational and partner bids 4♠ with 3+ pts should only pass with 2-
(5) So West had oodles to spare for a raise to 4♠ here.

The bottom lines: -

- Read new-sheet 121 again if you got the answers here wrong.
- Am I wasting my time when people ask me where they went wrong when I explained it fully in the news-sheets just three weeks earlier?

Everyone sacrificing in a slam!

Board 19 from Wednesday 16th

Dealer: ♠ Q432

South ♥ 8

E-W vul ♦ 107532

♣ K97

♠ K985

N

♠ AJ76

♥ A10942

W E

♥ KJ765

♦ K8

S

♦ 4

♣ 43

♣ 852

♠ 10

♥ Q3

♦ AQJ96

♣ AQJ106

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
1♥	3♦ (1)	4♥ (2)	5♦ (3)
pass	pass	5♥ (4)	6♦ (5)
6♥ (6)	pass	pass	dbl
all pass			

Now this auction may seem ridiculous (indeed it is) but it was not the beginner's table; even the club champion joined in the fun: -

- (1) Now some do play that this jump is weak after an overcall (but it is most certainly not standard and I would play it as the normal 10-12 points). I play 'standard' after an overcall but that a jump is weak after a double.
- (2) Good bid! That's what the Law says.
- (3) Now this South believed that his partner had the normal 11ish points and so bid 5♦ to make, fine.
- (4) But that's the end of the 'fine' bidding! So far it's just North who has made a 'silly' bid (unless he's agreed that 3♦ was weak), so why not have everybody else join in? East's last bid was correct (the Law) and this overreads the Law but is not too bad.
- (5) But this really is bad. Now South tried to explain to me afterwards that he thought that 5♥ was making. If he really believed that when partner is supposed to have 11 points who is he kidding?
- (6) Well, since everybody else has made a stupid bid, let's make it a full house. 6♥ is totally ridiculous of course when both sides have tried to sign off at a lower level. No wonder Bob and Dave (N-S) do well when people bid like this against them.

And what happened? If it was within my powers I would give everybody what they deserve (a zero) on the board. But unfortunately one is not always rewarded for good bidding nor always penalised for being silly and the total of the N-S and E-W points should add up to 100%. So N-S (Bob and Dave) won out on the 'silliness' battle and got the top when 6♥ went minus 3 for 800. Every other table seemed to bid this hand quite calmly and the maximum score to N-S was 110 (2♦+1) and the maximum for E-W was 170 (3♥+1). So nobody else even thought about game (let alone both sides sacrificing in slam!).

The bottom lines: -

- A very experienced established partnership should know what a raise to the 3 level after an overcall means.
- If the opponents try to sign off at (say) the 5 level, then don't sacrifice when they go one level higher!
- If the opponents sacrifice (6♦ here) then double them (don't sacrifice yourself).

A 2♣ opener?

Board 23 from Wednesday 16th

Dealer: ♠ AJ92
 South ♥ AK987
 both vul ♦ A
 ♣ KQ10

♠ 6	N	♠ KQ875
♥ 104	W E	♥ 65
♦ Q842	S	♦ K1053
♣ AJ9862		♣ 53
	♠ 1043	
	♥ QJ32	
	♦ J976	
	♣ 74	

Table A

West	North(M)	East	South
-	-	-	pass
pass	2♣ (1)	pass (2)	2♦ (3)
pass	2♥ (4)	pass	4♥ (5)
pass	pass	pass	

Table B

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

'Expert' Table

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
pass	1♥ (1)	1♠	2♥ (5)
pass	3♣ (6)	pass	3♥ (7)
pass	4♥ (8)	all pass	

Table C

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

- Table A (1) So what did you open with this North hand M in this week's quiz? A decent 21 points, so 2NT? Actually, I think that that's not a totally unreasonable option, but because of the two good majors I would open 1♥. And opening 2♣ (even if you play Benjamin) is not really a good move on two (or three) suiters. If you open 2♣ then there is little room to explore for a fit. And I sure don't like this North's choice of 2♣ in Standard American a 2♣ opening followed by a suit bid is game forcing and this North hand has nowhere near the required playing strength.
- (2) And 'obviously', especially vulnerable, East should pass here.
- (3) Negative.
- (4) Game forcing. I am just short of a 4♥ game in my hand (ho ho).
- (5) So let's play in 4♥ (fast arrival).

- Table B (1) Now this did pair play Benjamin twos, so 2♣ was either an 8 playing trick hand in an unspecified suit (dubious by my standards) or a 'balanced' 20-21.
- (2) Now most would pass here (especially opposite a passed partner), but this East was Jeff, give Jeff ½ a dozen points and a 5 card suit and not even a 2♣ opening by the opponents and being vulnerable can stop him from bidding.
- (3) So North considers this hand to be 8 playing tricks in ♥'s; and what's more he's now up at the 3 level opposite a potentially bust partner. As I said above, I would have opened the hand with 1♥, but having chosen 2♣ I would double (penalties) here, especially as East was Jeff. But North chose not to double, and (as Jeff would doubtless say), he missed the big boat - 2♠ doubled would probably be about 1100 for N-S.

- Table C (1) Finally somebody found the correct opening bid.
 (4) So this time the overcall is reasonable at the one level over a normal opening.
 (5) I would bid 2♥ here
 (6) 1NT here would show 18+ pts, so I guess that this bid means an enormous hand?
 (7) But presumably South did not realise this. But he should bid 3♥ anyway of course.
- 'Expert'
 Table (1) 1♥ is the best opening.
 (2) And with 4 trumps I think that 2♥ is fine.
 (6) A help-suit game try. Now North is always bidding game of course so this is actually to find out if South has a maximal 2♥ bid (then slam may be on).
 (7) Minimum.
 (8) So let's just play in game.

And what happened? One pair overbid to 6♥ and went down. Two pairs bid 4♥ (making or making +1) and at one table 1♥ was passed out. Even with no intervention I would bid 2♥ with the South hand because it's 4 trumps with points in the trump suit.

The bottom lines: -

- In Standard American a 2♣ opening should be within 1 trick of game.
- If you open a Benjamin 2♣ and the opponents overcall 2♠ then you do not have to rebid at the 3 level if dbl is a realistic bid.
- Do not overcall a Benjamin 2♣ bid with rubbish against opponents who know that there is a double card in the bidding box.

3NT or 5♦?

Board 20 from Wednesday 16th

Dealer: ♠ K1085
West ♥ 84
both vul ♦ A762
♣ Q83

♠ Q72	N	♠ A96
♥ A976	W E	♥ 10532
♦ 8	S	♦ 95
♣ J9642		♣ K1075
	♠ J43	
	♥ KQJ	
	♦ KQJ1043	
	♣ A	

Table A

West	North	East	South
pass	pass	pass	1♦
pass	1♠	pass	3♦
pass	4♦ (1)	pass	5♦
all pass			

Table B

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

So what would you bid at (1)? You probably know my views by now – if 3NT is a sensible option, then bid it.

And what happened? The top spot was 3NT+2. 5♦ made exactly for an average but 3NT went –3 and –1 at other tables .

Now this provoked an interesting discussion between Dave and myself as to which is the best contract for N-S. I believe that 3NT is the best contract looking just at the N-S cards. Dave pointed out that 3NT goes down on a ♣ lead as both the ♥A and ♣K are wrong; 5♦ makes because the ♠Q is onside. So which is best?

For me it's no contest. 3NT makes (probably with overtricks) unless you get a ♣ lead and the ♣K is offside and West has the ♥A (or East finds a ♠ switch to partner's ♠A), so it's much better than 50%. 5♦ can never score overtricks and goes down if the ♠Q is offside, so it's simply 50%. And if the cards lie favourably for both contracts then 3NT (with an overtrick or two) will score more. As usual, 9 tricks are usually easier than 11.

When the Moysian (4-3) fit is better than 5-2

Board 16 from Wednesday 16th

Dealer: ♠ 943
West ♥ AJ74
E-W vul ♦ KQ2
♣ 754

West (G)	North	East (H)	South
1♥	pass	1♠ (1)	pass
2♣	pass	2♥ (2)	pass
2♠ (3)	all pass	pass	

♠ AQ8	N	♠ KJ106
♥ Q10632	W E	♥ 85
♦ -	S	♦ AJ1074
♣ KQ832		♣ 106
	♠ 752	
	♥ K9	
	♦ 98653	
	♣ AJ9	

- (1) What did you respond with this East hand H(a) in this week's quiz? 1♠ is correct, this hand is not strong enough to bid 2♦ and then bid a (game forcing) ♠ bid.
- (2) And what did you bid with this East hand H(b) in the quiz? Even if you ply a 4th suit bid of 2♦ here as natural the hand is not strong enough. You should bid 2♥, this is simple preference and usually shows exactly 2♥'s.
- (3) What did you bid here with this West hand G in the quiz? You know that partner probably has 2♥'s and 4♠'s, but with a void (so you can ruff with the hand short in trumps) the Moysian 4-3 ♠ fit should play better than the 5-2 ♥ fit.

And what happened? 2♠ was the best spot (it made +2 once and exactly once) at the two tables where it was bid. One pair overbid to 4♠ and went two down.

Raise partner's pre-empt to the limit - 1

Board 18 from Friday 18th

Dealer: ♠ A63
East ♥ Q987
N-S vul ♦ AJ54
♣ J8

♠ Q1085	N	♠ KJ9874
♥ 10	W E	♥ KJ6
♦ K1097	S	♦ 86
♣ Q1065		♣ 94
	♠ -	
	♥ AJ543	
	♦ Q32	
	♣ AK732	

Table A

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

Table B

West(E)	North	East	South
-	-	2♠	dbl
4♠ (1)	pass (4)	pass	pass (5)

- Table A: (1) So what did you bid with this West hand (E) in this week's quiz? Clearly you should raise partner but 3♠ really is not enough. ...
(2) ... as North has an easy 4♥ bid.
(3) And it's too late for West to do any good by bidding 4♠ now – N-S have found their fit.
- Table B: (1) This West got it right. Partner has 6 ♠'s and so that's 10 combined ♠'s.
The Law says to bid 4♠ and that's what you should do.
(4) And that often makes life difficult for the opponents. But with this particular North hand I think that 5♥ is fairly clear, even 4NT looking for slam is reasonable
(5) But South now really has a problem. West's 4♠ bid is double-edged. Does he have a good hand (and North nothing) or was 4♠ just pre-emptive? Only West knows. 5♣ is probably worth a shot.

And what happened? Three N-S pairs were allowed to play in 4♥ and two pairs were pushed into 5♥; 11 or 12 tricks were always made. One E-W pair (Table B) got the top their way by playing in 4♠ going down just one.

The bottom lines: -

- When your partner pre-empts, add up the total number of combined trumps and raise him to the limit of The Law (but be sensible about it and look at the vulnerability).

Raise partner's pre-empt to the limit - 2

Board 22 from Friday 18th

When you pre-empt then you have told your hand, partner is in charge (the 'captain'). You should never bid again unless partner makes an invitational or forcing bid, and a simple raise of your suit is certainly neither. Let's see what went wrong when an experienced player ignored this 'rule'.

Dealer: ♠ AQ10974

East ♥ A4

E-W vul ♦ 64
♣ A83

West North East South

- - pass pass

2♥ (1) dbl (2) 3♥ (3) 4♠

5♥ (4) dbl all pass

♠ 5 N ♠ 6

♥ KQ653 W E ♥ J102

♦ Q85 S ♦ AJ1073

♣ KQ65 ♣ J1092

♠ KJ852

♥ 987

♦ K92

♣ 74

The 'non-silly' Tables

West North East South

- - pass pass

1♥ 1♠ 2♥ 3♠ (5)

pass 4♠ all pass

- (1) I did not put this West hand in the quiz because I hope that everybody realises that this is extremely bad bidding. Now a third seat opener may be light, but to open this hand with 2♥ seems ridiculous to me. A simple 1♥ is obviously correct.
- (2) I would overcall 2♠ here.
- (3) With 3 trumps, a simple raise to 3♥ is correct here (The Law).
- (4) With just 5♥'s and vulnerable against not, this is simply 'very silly'.
- (5) With 5♠'s I would bid 4♠ here, but I guess 3♠ is OK.

And what happened? 5♥ went two down for 500 away and a complete bottom. Most N-S pairs were scoring 420 in 4♠. Now West tried to justify his bidding – but it's falling on deaf ears. He explained that he was 'unlucky' that the ♦K was not in the doubling hand and that if it was then he would only be one down. True, but in that case 4♠ would also be going down – there's no getting away from 'The Law'.

The bottom lines: -

- Don't pre-empt with 12 points and a 5 card suit! The fact that partner is a passed hand is absolutely no excuse.
- Don't bid again when partner raises your pre-empt, he is the captain.
- Look at the vulnerability. Two down doubled is a bottom against non-vul opponents if there's no slam.

A balanced 25+ points

Board 27 from Friday 18th

So how do *you* bid a balanced hand with 25+ points?

Dealer:	♠ 108532	<u>Table A</u>			
South	♥ -	West	North	East	South
Love all	♦ 953	-	-	-	3NT (1)
	♣ KJ732	pass	pass (2)	pass	

♠ 976	N	♠ J4	<u>Table B</u>			
♥ Q2	W E	♥ J98743	West	North	East	South
♦ 10864	S	♦ Q72	-	-	-	2♣
♣ A854		♣ 106	pass	2♦	pass	3NT (3)
	♠ AKQ		pass	pass (4)	pass	

♥ AK1065
♦ AKJ
♣ Q9

<u>The Benji Table</u>			
West	North	East	South
-	-	-	2♦ (5)
pass	2♥ (6)	pass	2NT (7)
pass	3♥ (8)	pass	3♠
pass	4♣ (9)	pass	4♠ (10)

Table A: (1) This is the way to show a huge balanced hand if you don't play the gambling 3NT.

(2) But there is an enormous amount of bidding space consumed and North has no idea if 4♠ is better than 3NT. A silly 'system'.

Table B: (3) And this is the alternative approach in Standard American. What more can I say? You're again at the 3NT level and partner does not have a clue what to do.

(4) With this actual North hand he should probably bid (or transfer into) 4♠, but it could well be wrong. And if North had a 4 card major should he go past 3NT to bid a 4♣ Stayman??

So, either approach in Standard America simply does not work; agreed? So what's the solution? It was 'invented' by a Scotsman, Albert Benjamin. He simply stated that just one strong artificial bid (i.e. 2♣) was not sufficient, and that both 2♣ and 2♦ should be used as strong artificial bids. Unfortunately this splendid scheme has not yet made it across the big pond and, indeed, it is only commonly played in the UK.

Now I covered Benjamin twos in some detail in News-sheet 95, but let's see how the system copes with this deal: -

(5) Artificial and absolutely game forcing.

(6) (automatic) relay.

(7) 25+, balanced.

(8) transfer

(9) 2nd suit.

(10) Now South could settle for 4♠ or perhaps investigate slam. See how much more room this Benji system gives you! N-S got a top without even having to bid the slam.

And what happened? 4 out of the 6 pairs on Friday ended up in the inferior 3NT contract. The bottom line? Play Benjamin twos!

Obey the Law

Board 11 from Friday 18th

A recurring theme in the news-sheets, let's have another example of what awaits you if you disregard 'The Law'.

Dealer:	♠ J9654					
South	♥ 54		West	North	East	South
Love all	♦ AK7543		-	-	-	1♣
	♣ -		1♥	1♠ (1)	2♥	2♠
			3♥ (2)	4♠ (3)	pass	pass
			5♥ (4)	dbl (5)	all pass	
♠ 10	N	♠ AQ2				
♥ AK10982	W E	♥ Q76				
♦ QJ9	S	♦ 82				
♣ 1093		♣ K8742				
	♠ K873					
	♥ J3					
	♦ 106					
	♣ AQJ65					

- (1) This hand is not strong enough to bid 2♦.
- (2) Partner has promised just 3♥'s, and in this competitive situation the Law most certainly applies. West has 6♥'s and that is why 3♥ is the correct bid here.
- (3) Now North knows that there are only 9♠'s between them (especially if N-S play Support doubles, but that's another story); but with this great shape 4♠ may well stand a chance.
- (4) But here's the transgression. West has no way of knowing if North has made a speculative 4♠ bid or not and he should obey the Law. Partner has just 3♥'s and a total of 9 trumps is two less than 'the Law' dictates for the 5 level.
- (5) And North, knowing that 4♠ was by no means a secure contract, was more than happy to double.

And what happened? N-S mis-defended but the contract was still three down for a joint top to N-S (it was exactly the same at one other table). 4♠ was the final contract at three other tables but it made only once.

The bottom lines: -

- Obey the Law. To step over it by one is acceptable, but not two.
- It really is silly to give away 500 (should have been more) when the opponents may or may not make game which is only 420 if it makes.

Play in the 4-4 fit!

Board 13 from Friday 18th

One of the club's leading players chose to ignore this advice on Friday. He got exactly what he deserved (a bottom): -

Dealer:	♠ 10863				
North	♥ AQ53	West	North(F)	East	South
Both vul	♦ KQJ	-	1NT	pass	2♣
	♣ KJ	pass	2♥ (1)	pass	3NT (2)
		pass	pass (3)	pass	
♠ A7	N	♠ 954			
♥ J108642	W E	♥ 7			
♦ 54	S	♦ 9732			
♣ 963		♣ AQ742			
	♠ KQJ2				
	♥ K9				
	♦ A1086				
	♣ 1085				

- (1) Always reply 2♥ with both majors.
- (2) This guarantees a 4 card ♠ suit (other wise East would not have bothered with Stayman).
- (3) So what did you bid with this North hand F in this week's quiz? You should bid 4♠. The fact that you have no points in ♠'s really is irrelevant; partner has 4 ♠'s and the 4-4 fit will usually generate an extra trick and/or stop opponent's from running a suit.

And what happened? 3NT was deservedly one down, with 4♠ either making or making +1 at other tables. Actually, only two pairs managed to find the 4-4 ♠ fit. Guess that I simply have not said enough about it in the news-sheets??

The bottom lines: -

- When the 1NT bidder's partner bids Stayman followed by 3NT, that guarantees a 4 card major.
- Play in the 4-4 fit.

Too High

Board 4 from Monday 14th

4♠ was way too high on this deal, so who do you think overbid?

Dealer: ♠ K9862
West ♥ Q98
both vul ♦ A94
♣ 102

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

♠ Q1043	N	♠ A
♥ 764	W E	♥ J53
♦ 3	S	♦ KJ10875
♣ Q9865		♣ A43

♠ J75
♥ AK102
♦ Q62
♣ KJ7

To answer the question, both
North and South overbid.

- (1) So what did you bid with this South hand A(a) in this week's quiz? I bet that most of you made some sort of noise (probably double)? To me it's a clear pass. It is a couple of points shy of a 1NT overcall and with this totally flat shape is unsuitable for a take-out double. If your partner understands balancing then you should certainly not bid here.
- (2) A jump here shows around 9-11 points and is non-forcing.
- (3) And what did you bid with this South hand A(b) in this week's quiz? With this flat shape and just 3 poor ♠'s it's not worth another bid. Pass is best.
- (4) Now South has invited game and North has five ♠'s, but accepting the invitation with just 9 points is dubious.

A 4♠ opener? – part 1

Board 20 from Friday 18th

Dealer: ♠ 9875
West ♥ 53
both vul ♦ 9832
♣ AK4

West(J)	North	East	South
4♠ (1)	all pass		

♠ AKQJ6432	N	♠ 10
♥ 4	W E	♥ KJ9862
♦ Q5	S	♦ A107
♣ 98		♣ J1063

♠ -
♥ AQJ107
♦ KJ64
♣ Q752

- (1) What did you open with this West hand J in this week's quiz? This is a typical 4♠ opener – 8 ♠'s and not much else. Pre-emptive.

And what happened? 4♠ was bid at 5 out of the 6 tables, making twice.

A 4♠ opener? – part 2

Board 7 from Friday 18th

There was a fair bit of discussion over this board from Friday: -

Dealer:	♠ 9	<u>Table A</u>			
South	♥ AJ10986	West	North	East	South (L)
Both vul	♦ A109753	-	-	-	4♠ (1)
	♣ -	all pass			

♠ 853	N	♠ 102	<u>Table B</u>			
♥ 52	W E	♥ 743	West	North	East	South
♦ J86	S	♦ K2	-	-	-	1♠ (1)
♣ AK762		♣ QJ10843	pass	2♥	pass	4♠
	♠ AKQJ764		all pass			

♥ KQ	<u>The 'expert' Benji Table</u>			
♦ Q4	West	North	East	South
♣ 95	-	-	-	2♣ (1)
	pass	2♦ (2)	pass	2♠ (3)
	pass	3♥	pass	3♠
	pass	4♦	pass	4♠
	pass	5♠ (4)	pass	6♠ (5)
	all pass			

Table A: (1) What did you open with this South hand L in this week's quiz? This hand really is too good for a 4♠ opening.

Table B: (1) And playing Standard American I would open 1♠ and then jump to 4♠.

But if you play strong twos (or Benjamin) then you have more chance to reach a slam (7♥ and 7♠ are cold, but difficult to bid – even Chuck acknowledged this).

- 'Expert' (1) Playing Benjamin twos you open 2♣ to show an 8 playing trick hand.
Benji (2) Automatic relay.
Table (3) 8 playing tricks with ♠'s as trumps.
(4) Now North knows that South has a strong hand with ♠'s and that there are certainly at least 10 tricks (South's promised 8 plus North's two aces). What's more, he knows that South has some values outside ♠'s (otherwise South would have opened 4♠). Since he has shown both of his suits, I think that North, with the ♣ void, should try 5♠ here.
(5) Since North's 5♠ bid is a slam try, South knows that his ♥KQ are golden cards and he should accept. Don't ask me how 7♠ can be bid.

And what happened? Two tables bid 6♠ and four tables rested in 4♠. Everybody made 13 tricks.

Incidentally, I discussed Namyats (a 4♦ opening is a good 4♠ opening) in news-sheet 106 and I think that Namyats players should also easily reach the small slam.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: (a) Pass. It's not good enough for 1NT and this flat shape is totally unsuitable for a take-out double. Remember that you have a partner and you will get another chance to bid if you wish (assuming partner knows about balancing).
(b) Pass. Partner's 2♠ shows about 9-11 points and this flat hand with just 3 trumps is not worth another noise.
- Hand B: 2♠ or pass. 2♠ is a weak bid but mildly encouraging – as you have excellent ♣ support you don't mind if partner bids on. Pass is very reasonable of course (and probably best at teams) but at pairs scoring 2♠ scores more (if it makes!).
- Hand C: (a) 1♣ or 1♦. Opinions differ here but you know me, open 1♣ if equal length in the minors as it leaves more bidding (for both partner and your rebid).
(b) 1NT or 2♣. And here we see the problem – you have no sensible rebid. You would have a similar problem if you had opened 1♦. You could rebid 2♣ (and thus lie about the ♣ length) or 1NT (and thus lie about the point range). With this actual hand 1NT (12-14 points) may be best as partner bidding your singleton degrades the hand.
- Hand D: (a) Double.
(b) 1NT. Showing 19-21 points (i.e. a hand too strong to overcall 1NT)
(c) 3♠. This is highly invitational and partner will only pass if he is totally bust (about 0-2 points). 4♠ is incorrect because partner has promised nothing and may have zero points.
- Hand E: 4♠. Raise partner's pre-empt to the limit.
- Hand F: 4♠. Play in the 4-4 ♠ fit. Partner has promised 4 ♠'s as otherwise he would not have bid Stayman.
- Hand G: 2♠. Pass is reasonable (play in the 5-2 ♥ fit) but with a ♦ void (so you can ruff with the hand with short trumps) I would prefer to play in the 4-3 ♠ fit.
- Hand H: 2♥. Give partner preference back to his 1st bid suit.
- Hand J: 4♠. Showing a weak(ish) hand with 8 ♠'s.
- Hand K: 2NT or 1♦. Now just about everybody I know plays 2NT here as 11-12 points and I agree that that's the simplest method. You could bid 1♦ and probably bid 2NT later (also showing 11-12), but what's the point?
- Hand L: 1♠. It's too good for 4♠. If you play Benjamin twos then 2♣ followed by 2♠ (8 playing tricks) is fine, and if you play Namyats then 4♦ (a good 4♠) is probably the best bid.
- Hand M: 1♥. The hand is not good enough for 2♣. 2NT is a reasonable alternative.