

The Blackwood bidder is in charge

Board 18 from Monday 6th

Here's the story behind that 7NT with two aces missing on Monday: -

Dealer:	♠ A2			<u>Table A</u>			
East	♥ 97532			West(G)	North	East	South
N-S vul	♦ J543			-	-	1♠	pass
	♣ 107			2♣ (1)	pass	3♣	pass
				4NT (2)	pass	5♣ (3)	pass
♠ QJ7	N	♠ K10943		5♠ (4)	pass	6♠ (5)	pass
♥ KQ6	W E	♥ 8		7NT (6)	dbl	all pass	
♦ KQ2	S	♦ AQ7					
♣ AKJ8		♣ Q954		<u>'Expert Table'</u>			
	♠ 865			West(G)	North	East	South
	♥ AJ104			-	-	1♠	pass
	♦ 1096			2♣ (1)	pass	3♣	pass
	♣ 632			3♣ (2)	pass	4♦ (7)	pass
				4NT (8)	pass	5♣ (9)	pass
				5♥ (10)	pass	5NT	all pass

- Table A: (1) What did you bid with this West hand G in this week's quiz? 2♣ is forcing and there's no need to leap about. This pair play 2/1 and so 2♣ was actually game forcing here, but 2♣ is best whatever system you play.
- (2) And this pair also play RKCB(1430) so 4NT here is RKCB with ♣'s as trumps. This really is a rather poor bid as West really needs to know about the ♠K and our 'experts' show how that is done later.
- (3) 1 or 4 key cards.
- (4) East knows that it's not 4 key cards and so he signed off in 5♠. 5NT would be asking for kings and West did not know how to sign off in 5NT.
- (5) But East was a little confused here; if ♠'s are trumps then he has an extra key-card, so he bid 6♠.
- (6) And West also got a trifle confused, thinking that East must 4 key cards and so he bid the grand.
- 'Expert Table (1) This 2♣ response looks fine.
- (2) But our expert correctly sets ♠'s as trumps here. Playing 2/1 it's game forcing.
- (7) With a minimal opener it's a matter of partnership understanding whether East should simply bid 4♠ or cue bid his ♦A.
- (8) Either way, 4NT is now RKCB for ♠'s.
- (9) 1 or 4 key cards playing 1430
- (10) Now West can happily sign off in 5♠ if he wishes and there will be no confusion. But there is a mechanism to settle in 5NT if you wish. After you have bid Blackwood and found that there are two aces/key cards missing you cannot bid 5NT as that's asking for kings, so a bid of the highest unbid suit (provided that it does not mean anything else) asks partner to bid 5NT. In this actual sequence 5♦ would be the trump queen ask and so 5♥ is spare for this use. Had the response been 5♦ then 5♥ would be the trump queen ask and there's no way to stop in 5NT.

And what happened? One pair managed to stop nicely in 5NT (our Swedish visitors playing an advanced variation of Precision ♣). 4♥ and 5♥ were other popular resting places.

Blackwood (or RKCB) when a minor suit is trumps.

Now using 4NT as Blackwood when a minor suit is trumps can be very dodgy as you may well be committed to slam with two aces/key cards missing if partner does not have the required stuff. There are various ways round the problem and you can take your pick: -

- a) 4 of the (agreed) minor is Blackwood
- b) 4 of the other minor is Blackwood.
- c) 4 of the suit above trumps is Blackwood.

You then use your usual step responses, normal or RKCB or 1430 or whatever. I personally prefer (c) and it can also be applied when ♥'s are trumps (so 4♠ is Blackwood). This variation is called Kickback and was invented, I believe, by Marty Bergen.

Editorial

John Gavens has finally gone, and this time he is thrown out of the club for good and he will most certainly not ever be returning. He can join Henrik, Jan, Alex and the others who are not welcome at this club. Now Dave, John Bourne, Sid and Bob Short are 4 of the few players who can play ancient Acol in the club, but John has been rude to all of them and all have refused to play with him again. As I now add myself to that list it obviously would be very difficult to find a partner for him anyway. John has clearly been following, and greatly surpassing, Alfred Sheinwold's quote for many years: -

- Since the average person's small supply of politeness must last him all his life, he can't afford to waste it on bridge partners.

4 card majors?

Board 15 from Friday 3rd March

What did you open playing Acol with this West hand H in this week's quiz? Remember these E-W hands form last week's news-sheet? (the 'Like a bull in a china shop' article). I said that one pair landed in a 'lucky' 6♥. Apparently the bidding started 1♥ - 2♣ - 2♦ and off they went to 6♥. Now you can open 1♥ with a 4 card major playing Acol and the reason that East bid 6♥ was that he thought that West was promising 5 ♥'s. Was he?

♠ J	N	♠ A98
♥ AQ42	W E	♥ KJ6
♦ AJ1042	S	♦ 65
♣ Q64		♣ AKJ75_

Yes! I mentioned this in a different article last week. You can open a 4 card major playing Acol, but only if your rebid in NT (or supporting partner). The correct opening with this West hand playing Acol is 1♦.

3NT missed

Board 27 from Friday 10th

A comfortable 3NT was missed here, and a very silly 2♥ reached, who's to blame? :-

Dealer:	♠ 9532				
South	♥ A105	West(E)	North	East(B)	South
Love all	♦ Q954	-	-	-	pass
	♣ K3	1NT (1)	pass	2♣ (2)	pass
		2♦	pass	2♥ (3)	pass
		pass (4)	pass		
♠ K64	N	♠ AJ108			
♥ K8	W E	♥ Q964			
♦ AK102	S	♦ 3			
♣ AJ42		♣ 10986			
	♠ Q7				
	♥ J732				
	♦ J876				
	♣ Q75				

- (1) What did you open with this West hand E in this week's quiz? This West opened 1NT because he wanted to protect his two kings, but it's one point over the top and with reasonable shape a 1♦ opening (followed by a jump in NT) is clearly called for.
- (2) What did you bid with this East hand B(a) in this weeks quiz? 2♣ is absolutely correct.
- (3) What did you bid with this East hand B(b) in this weeks quiz? This 2♥ bid is ridiculous. First of all, how many points is this East hand B worth? If you answer is 7, then what would your answer be to a hand like ♠AJ54 ♥Q642 ♦3 ♣ 6543? If you think that they are both the same, then read up on hand evaluation (there's a section on our web site). AJ108 is not just five points; 10986 is not zero points. 4441 type shape is good – there are three possibilities to develop tricks. Having bid 2♣ and got the negative 2♦ response, I would bid 3NT but would not argue too much with the rather pessimistic 2NT. To bid 2♥/♠ here promises a weak hand and shows 5 cards in the suit bid, apart from lying about the ♥ length it is a gross underbid.
- (4) West has no option but to pass, 5-2 is usually better than 4-3.

And what happened? The ridiculous contract got it's deserved bottom. And who's to blame? Both bid badly, but in my opinion East's bidding and hand evaluation were extremely poor.

♠ J762 Now, of course, our (nameless) East blamed West. West admitted that he had
♥ KJ42 underbid and should have opened 1♦, but he then asked East why he had bid
♦ 3 Garbage Stayman. East said that he was 'just going with the field'. Now as it
♣ 10652 happens, I recall a similar hand (Hand E from news-sheet 158 on the left here) where this
West had used Garbage Stayman and received about 5 minutes worth of flack from his
partner (this East) because he did not have 9 cards in the majors.

The bottom lines: -

- Do not open 1NT with a decent 18 count.
- 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥/♠ is weak and promises 5 cards in the major bid (and 4 in the other).
- This East hand B is **easily** worth an invitation (maybe more) opposite a 1NT opener.
- 10's are worth something, a 1098x sequence is worth a lot (especially in NT).
- Don't blame partner for your bad boards. John Gavens is gone now but there's still one or two out there.
- You reap what you sow.

Mention the minor opposite 1NT? – part 1Board 7 from Friday 10th

Dealer: ♠ 10962
 South ♥ 62
 Both vul ♦ QJ108
 ♣ A43

♠ KQ N
 ♥ A1087 W E
 ♦ AK952 S
 ♣ 65

♠ 8753
 ♥ KQJ9
 ♦ 743
 ♣ Q9

♠ AJ4
 ♥ 543
 ♦ 6
 ♣ KJ10872

West	North	East(A)	South
-	-	-	pass
1NT (1)	pass	2♠ (2)	pass
3♦ (3)	pass	4♣ (4)	pass
4NT (5)	all pass		

- (1) This one is close. I won't argue with 1NT but the West hand is good enough to reverse and with no points in ♣'s a 1♦ opening followed by a reverse into 2♥ is a very reasonable alternative to the 1NT opening. Note that, despite what Mr. John Gavens says, a reverse would promise 5 cards in the suit opened, whatever system you play. Take the ♦2 away and put it with the ♣'s then a 1NT opening is clear (or 1♥ followed by NT playing Acol).
- (2) What did you bid with this East hand A in this week's quiz? I don't think it's worth mentioning the ♣ suit and I would simply bid 3NT. This 2♠ bid was a transfer showing an unspecified minor.
- (3) West should obediently bid 3♣ here, but he wanted to show his ♦'s (perhaps he should have opened 1♦ in that case?).
- (4) East should simply bid 3NT here, but he still wanted to show his ♣ suit for some reason.
- (5) Finally they arrive in NT, but one level too high.

And what happened? Unfortunately 4NT went one down!

The bottom lines: -

- Many players play that 2♠ is a transfer to either minor (partner should bid 3♣ which is passed or corrected) but this treatment only really works with weak hands because if responder bids on above 3♦ then his minor suit is not known.
- I recommend 4-way transfers (where the transfer to a minor is specified) to more experienced pairs.
- Don't bother to mention a minor if you are angling for 3NT anyway.
- 9 tricks (in 3NT) is usually easier than 11 tricks (in 5♣/♦).
- Some experts can be quoted as saying that there are only 3 game contracts (worth bidding) 3NT, 4♥ and 4♠. I agree that that is virtually always the case.
- But that does not mean that you should never mention a minor suit when looking for game opposite 1NT, the hand on the next page is an interesting example.

Mention the minor opposite 1NT? – part 2Board 8 from Friday 10th

Dealer: ♠ A543
 West ♥ 982
 Love all ♦ AQ7
 ♣ AQ3

West	North	East	South(D)
pass	1NT	pass (1)	2NT (2)
pass	3♣ (3)	pass	3♠ (4)
pass	3NT (5)	all pass	

♠ J976	N	♠ 10
♥ KJ	W E	♥ AQ1063
♦ 1094	S	♦ 5
♣ J754		♣ K109862
	♠ KQ82	
	♥ 754	
	♦ KJ8632	
	♣ -	

- (1) I would make a loud noise here. At this vulnerability you can bid twice and I would bid 2♥ playing Multi Landy or Cappelletti (♥'s and a minor) and then bid ♣'s. This shows the shape but does not promise HCPs as you did not double.
- (2) What did you bid with this South hand D in this week's quiz? Traditionally one bids Stayman and then if no fit is uncovered you bid 3♦, natural and forcing. This N-S pair play 4-way transfers and 2NT was a transfer specifically to ♦'s.
- (3) A super-accept. Promising Hxx or xxxx or better in ♦'s (where H is A,K or Q).
- (4) A second suit.
- (5) North knows that South has 4 ♠'s and 5-6 ♦'s and game forcing values. With a totally flat hand, good top cards in ♦'s and the knowledge that the ♦ suit will provide tricks North quite reasonably rejected the known 4-4 ♠ fit and went for the NT game. A rare exception to the general rule of playing in the 4-4 fit.

And what happened? Now as it happens neither 3NT nor 4♠ make on a ♥ lead. But East quite reasonably led a ♣ and North's decision to play in NT paid off.

The bottom lines: -

- Normally one should play in a 4-4 major suit fit, but if the major is weak and you know there is a long running minor 3NT may be better.
- I recommend 4-way transfers to experienced partnerships – that's the way to describe your hand!

A weak two?North hand 4 from Friday 10th

Hand C

♠ QJ9865
 ♥ 62
 ♦ 6
 ♣ Q943

What did you open, both vul, in 2nd seat with this North Hand C in this week's quiz? Now I think that 2♠ is very sensible, but I seem to remember somebody writing just last week that Ogust is a silly convention as disciplined players have 5 points in their suit (most especially vul in 2nd seat?). I wonder what Chuck would say about this opening? Actually Chuck was at the table and said nothing. I was South.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A:** 3NT. With an excellent 9++ points you have values for 3NT. But unless you play some sort of reasonably sophisticated form of transfers (like 4-way transfers) then there is no way to show specifically a ♣ suit and then bid 3NT. But even if playing 4-way transfers there probably is not much point and a simple 3NT is fine.
- Hand B:** (a) 2♣, Stayman. This hand is easily worth an invitation, perhaps game.
(b) 2NT, or even 3NT.
(c) 4♥/♠, with a fit it is surely worth game, but 3♥/♠ is reasonable. Pass would be very pessimistic.
- Hand C:** I would open 2♠. There's no problem if you play Ogust. I believe that 2♠ is fine with this hand because of the 'body' in the ♠ suit and possession of the outside 4-carder. Good for offence, bad for defence.
- Hand D:** Using traditional methods you bid 2♣. If partner bids 2♦ then you bid 3♦, showing 5+ ♦'s and a major and forcing; if partner bids 2♥ then you bid 3♦, showing 5+ ♦'s and 4 ♠'s; if partner bids 2♠ then you bid 4♣ as you cannot bid 3♦ as that would show ♥'s and ♦'s. Obviously this is not that satisfactory and it's best for experienced partnerships to play 4-way transfers. Playing 4-way transfers I prefer to transfer into the minor and then bid the major (thus showing 5+ cards in the specific minor and 4 cards in the major bid) – game forcing and showing your shape exactly.
- Hand E:** 1♦ (followed by 2NT over a 1♥/♠/NT response from partner). The hand has 18 points, average shape and a ten. 1NT is an underbid.
- Hand F:** 3♥. Ask partner if he has a ♥ stop. And if he has something like ♥Kx then it needs to be played from his hand.
- Hand G:** 2♣. There is no need to go leaping about. Take it slowly with a forcing bid and find out more about partner's hand.
- Hand H:** 1♦. Playing Acol you should only open a 2 card major if your rebid is NT. If you open this hand 1♥ and subsequently bid ♦'s then that promises 5 ♥'s.

Bidding Sequence Answers are on the previous page