

BRIDGE - THE MIND GAME

A SIMPLER BLUE CLUB

SYSTEM

Mississauga Style



With
a
Forword
by
Benito Garozzo

D A N B E R K L E Y

Dan Berkley

A Simpler

BLUE CLUB

System

Mississauga Style

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by Dan Berkley

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This book is dedicated to the world's most successful bridge team of all times, the Italian Blue Team, for its contribution to the development and world-wide promotion of the bridge game

*"The bridge game is like the life game:
to win, you need to play it intelligently"*

Dan Berkley

HAVE GOOD GAMES!

A Simpler Blue Club System
Mississauga Style

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Foreword

by BENITO GAROZZO

Blue Club! It brings back many sweet memories about the Blue Team members and about the Blue Club system, about our successes, friendships and travels through the world trying to be the best. I am proud I was a member of the great Italian Blue Team and of my contribution to the development of the Blue Club and other systems that brought us world-wide successes for many years.

Bridge bidding evolves in time, introducing innovations to make them better for the competitions of these days. Consequently, the original Blue Club system has been played less and less. Many players of the new generation have not even heard about this system that was so successful in the past.

Perhaps it is time to remind people about it and give it another life by making it simpler and more modern. I welcome Dan's intention to do this in his book!

I do not remember meeting Dan personally, although it seems we played once at the same table about 45 - 50 years ago in Europe. Based on what he says, he became interested in the Blue Club system, got the French version of the book I published together with Yallouze in 1968 ("Bridge de Compétition"), and learned the system. He is passionate about bridge and about introducing the game to other people. His previous book "Bridge - The Beginner's Guide" was considered by some as *".... the best of all these (eBooks)...."* (Editor's note: the "Learning Bridge" website).

When I received his invitation to write the foreword for his new book I was surprised but delighted that someone is still interested in the Blue Club system and in raising the interest in it again.

His book "A Simpler Blue Club System" presents a simplified and more modern version of the system. His version, that he named the *"Mississauga Style"*, makes changes to the original system but keeps most of its core. The book explains these modifications comparative to the original Blue Club to show the reader how the system was improved and simplified. The most important modification he makes is accounting for the hand distribution, which, in my opinion, is the most important thing in the modern bidding.

The simplifications and the introduction of some standard bidding make it easier to learn the system, to remember it and use it, but still keep it precise. Guiding principles and many examples explain the bidding logic. This version also allows the reader to use his or hers own way of bidding in some situations, which makes it flexible.

I believe the way in which the book presents the system is the best way, logical and well structured. Thus, the book is excellent for bridge players that want to learn about and try a "strong club" system to become more competitive.

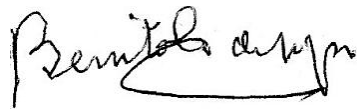
Thank you Dan for bringing back precious old memories and for starting to raise again the interest of bridge players in my Blue Club system, one of the most successful bidding systems!

Benito Garozzo

Professional Bridge Player and Coach

Multiple World Champion

Co-author of the original Blue Club system



Rome, Italy

June 2018

*"You should never stop studying,
no matter how many times you win"*

Benito Garozzo

INTRODUCTION

The Blue Team Club bidding system (or Blue Club for short) was developed by members of the famous Italian Blue Team (Squadra Azzurra) at the end of 1950's and in 1960's. It derives from the Neapolitan Club system attributed to Eugenio Chiaradia. Benito Garozzo joined the team in 1960 and continued to further develop it together with Pietro Forquet and then with his former partner Leon Yallouze.

The system was described publically first time in Garozzo and Forquet's 1967 book *"Fiori Squadra Azzurra"* ("Blue Team Club") and subsequently, in the better known Garozzo and Yallouze's 1968 book *"Bridge de Compétition"*. Its English translation and adaptation was done by Terence Reese who published his *"The Blue Club"* book in 1969, in London, Great Britain.

Subsequently, a number of versions of this system were developed trying to bring improvements and/or simplifications (e.g.: Alex Knox's *"Blue Club, Calgary Casual Style"*, Arturo Franco and Marco Pancotti's *"Blue Team Club"*, Martin Johnson's *"Modern Blue Team Club"*, etc.).

The system, although less popular these days, is still being played (with modifications) by world-class players especially in Europe.

The Italian Blue Team is considered by many the greatest bridge team of all times. The regular team partnerships were Walter Avarelli - Giorgio Belladonna, Benito Garozzo - Pietro Forquet and Massimo D'Alelio - Camilo Pabis Ticci. Eugenio Chiardia and Gulielmo Siniscalco played in the early years. The coach and non-playing captain until 1967 was Carl Alberto Perroux. Belladonna - Garozzo pair played in 1970's.

Playing the Neapolitan Club system and then the Blue Club system, the team dominated decisively the bridge world in 1950's, 1960's and first half of 1970's. The team won sixteen world titles between 1957 and 1975, including the 1972 Olympiad and 1973, 1974, 1975 Bermuda Bowl.

The Blue Club bidding system is a forcing, strong club system and it is generally considered partially artificial (as opposed to a natural system). In other words, the bid does not always show your actual holding in the suit you bid, as in the case of a natural system. However, in most cases, it does. This is why it is considered only partially artificial, being mostly natural with a few artificial bids.

Regarding natural systems (like Standard American or Acol), how natural are they anymore?! There are over 360 conventions that can be used with them, superimposed on the basic system itself. More recently, the natural systems have also incorporated bidding techniques developed initially for artificial systems, such as control-showing cue-bidding, 4NT quantitative bid, etc.

The strength of the Blue Club system resides in the fact that it was *designed purposely from the beginning* to have some artificiality, thus making it logical and consistent *by design*. This means that in a given situation it is logical to make a certain bid and nothing else. There is not too much to learn by heart, just follow the logics of the bidding sequence. Sure, some of the traditional conventions can and are being used in the Blue Club system, too. However, there is no need for too many of them.

The artificiality, the logics behind the bidding and the bidding structure of the Blue Club system makes it very precise and effective. However, the precision of the system requires discipline when using it.

Proof of its effectiveness is the fact that some Blue Club techniques have been included more recently in standard systems of various flavors, as already mentioned. Also, other “artificial” strong club systems (e.g.: Precision, Schenken, etc.) were developed in response to the effectiveness of the Neapolitan and Blue Club and to the long string of victories of the Italian Blue Team that was using them.

How difficult (or not) is to learn it? Omar Sharif learned it in the 1960's in two weeks after which he won a team event in Beirut with Garozzo, Yallouze and Gress.

This book presents a simplified and modernized version that includes elements of the Standard American system. This makes it easier to learn it and play it. At the same time, it is a lot of fun learning something new, interesting and effective. I named this version the *"Mississauga Style"*, because this is where I live.

The book is addressed to the bridge players of various levels who want to start learning a new bidding system for the purpose of becoming more competitive or just for the fun of it.

The book contains numerous tables and bulleted lists to help staying focused on the topic on hand. It also sacrifices sometimes the formatting for the sake of clarity. At the same time, the explanations of the bids, responses, rebids and examples are more detailed to provide good understanding of their meaning and logic.

Each Chapter of the book addresses a certain topic. It starts by presenting main bidding principles and approaches pertaining to the respective topic. Once they are understood and learned well, the respective bidding sequences become very logical: only that specific sequence would make sense and nothing else. This helps with the clarity and makes it easy to learn and play the system, as mentioned before.

The main Chapters are broken down in smaller Sections describing possible cases and bidding sequences related to the respective topic. Relevant explanations and numerous examples are included in each Section to consolidate what was learned in the respective Section. Summary tables are included at the end of many Sections.

The explanations of the examples in the Chapter dealing with the common openings of 1♦, 1♥, 1♠ include comments related to responses. Consequently, it may be a good idea to review the responses to this type of openings (i.e.: Chapter 7) before analyzing the examples in the respective Chapter.

The book also contains quizzes to consolidate what was learned in the respective Chapter. They are conceived in such a way to make the reader go back and review the respective Chapter in order to be able to answer them. The answers are in the book Appendix.

For simplicity, the masculine pronoun of the players is being used.

It is my hope that by the end of this book you have acquired an interest in this beautiful and effective system, start playing it and enjoying it.

Chapter 1 – System Main Principles and Approaches

1.1. Principles and Approaches

The Blue Club system was developed based on a few principles that led to the entire structure of the system. They are the core of the system. The following list is purposely more extensive than usually presented in literature to provide a good basis for helping later on with easy understanding of the logics of bidding sequences. All of these principles are used by the simplified style presented in this book.

The list also specifies modifications of some of the original principles, modifications adopted here to simplify and "modernize" the system, and to eliminate some of the disadvantages of the original system.

The three main principles of the Blue Club system and the modifications adopted by the Mississauga style are described in the following paragraphs:

1. The use of total points (Tp) and of controls (A, K, void, singleton) for evaluating the strength of the hand.

The original Blue Club system uses only high card points (HCp), without accounting for the hand distribution. As Benito Garozzo pointed out later on in 1999, this represents a weakness of the system in the modern times competitive bridge. The use of HCp only may miss opening bids and contracts with unbalanced hands that have less HCp but great potential for good contracts. In a more recent interview, he said: *"The distribution is the most important thing and you should gear your bidding to concentrate on that first."*

Consequently, the Blue Club style presented in this book accounts for both the high-card (HCp) and distribution (Dp) points. The total points (Tp) are used for evaluating the strength of unbalanced hands when aiming towards a suit contract. The HCp are shown more as a reference to the original Blue Club.

The distribution points are accounted for in a traditional way, as it follows:

- Short suit distribution points:
 - doubleton = 1 Dp
 - singleton = 2 Dp
 - void = 3 Dp
- Long trump suit distribution points: each card over 8-card fit = 1 Dp

- The short suit distribution points method (i.e.: voids, singletons and doubletons) is used for the initial evaluation of the opener's and responder's hands. Both the short and long trump suit distribution points (i.e.: number of trump cards in the combined hands) are used for reevaluation after the fit has been established.

The justification of taking the approach of using only the short suit distribution points for the initial evaluation of the opener's hand is that it accounts for avoiding losing tricks in the short suits, not for making additional tricks by ruffing in those suits. If the pair wins the contract and the opener becomes the declarer, ruffing in declarer's hand would be made usually from the long side of the trump suit and would not bring additional tricks.

- The value of the unguarded high cards is depreciated.

Examples: Jx = 0 HCp vs. Jxxx = 1 HCp
 Kx = 2 HCp instead of 3 HCp

- The definition of the relevant point-ranges in terms of total points (Tp) is done usually by adding 1 Dp to the respective high card points (HCp) ranges used by the original Blue Club system.

Examples for the case of opening with one of a suit:

- open one of a suit with +12 HCp, +13 Tp
- the point-range of a weak opening hand is 12 - 14 HCp (13 - 15 Tp)
- the point-range of a strong opening hand is 15 - 16 HCp (16 - 18 Tp) (this is an exception from adding only 1 Dp to the HCp when defining point-ranges)
- The number of hand winning and losing tricks must also be taken into consideration and it can be a deciding factor in certain bidding sequences. This and accounting for hand distribution are essential factors in the modern time competitions when most of the boards have computer-generated pre-dealt hands and the distribution is often very unbalanced.

2. Strong 1♣ opening (+17 HCp, +19 Tp), with responses showing the number of high card controls (A = two controls, K = one control).
3. Canapé style of bidding two-suited hands, including the use of 4-card major openings. This bidding style applies both to the opening and to the response bids, but the requirements are different.

The original Canapé style was developed by Pierre Albarran based on the *reverse* bidding approach introduced by Ely Culbertson in 1930s. Blue Club uses a slightly different version. In addition, this Mississauga style uses total points, not only high card points.

On short:

- with a weak 2-suit hand (12 - 14 HCp, 13 - 15 Tp), the higher-ranking suit is bid first ("*weak Canapé*" approach)
- with a strong 2-suit hand (15 - 16 HCp, 16 - 18 Tp), the better suit (longer or stronger if equal) is bid second (using the "*strong Canapé*" or the "*reverse*" approach, as applicable)

Details are presented in the following two Summaries.

Summary for the case of opener's Canapé bids:

- **Weak Canapé** opening and rebid with weak hands (12 - 14 HCp, 13 - 15 Tp)
 - Open with the higher-ranking suit then, in the 2nd round, bid the lower-ranking suit at 2- or 3-level without jump, depending on the response. It applies to hand distributions of the type 4 - 4, 4 - 5, 4 - 6, 5 - 4, 5 - 5.

Example:

<u>S</u>	<u>N</u>
1♠	- 2♣
2♥	- ?

With a 6 - 4 distribution, it is preferably to open and then rebid the long major and treat the hand as a one-suiter, particularly if the lower - ranking suit is weak.

- The higher-ranking suit with which the opening was made has to be a biddable suit (QJxx or better).

If the bid in the 2nd round of the lower-ranking suit raises the level over partner's response, it suggests that the respective suit has at least 5 cards.

Example:

<u>S</u>	<u>N</u>
1♠ -	2♥
3♦ - ?	(S has a +5-card diamond suit)

Exceptions:

- With a 5-card high-ranking rebiddable suit (2 HCs) and a 4-card low-ranking biddable suit (5 - 4), rebid first the 5-card higher-ranking suit before bidding the 4-card lower-ranking suit, to show it has 5 cards.
- With a 5 - 5 major - minor biddable suits, it is preferable to rebid first the major, particularly if it is rebiddable or stronger, trying to find a 5 - 3 fit. A contract in a major suit is usually preferable.

Example:

<u>S</u>	<u>N</u>
1♠ -	2♣
2♠ -	3♣
3♦ -	?

The example is illustrative for both exceptions, describing an opener's hand with either 5 - 4 or with 5 - 5 spade - diamond suits, with rebiddable spades

- **Strong Canapé** opening and rebid with 2-suit strong hands (15-16 HCp, 16-18 Tp) and a better lower ranking suit:
 - Open with the higher-ranking suit then, in the 2nd round, jump one step in the lower-ranking suit. It applies to distributions of the type 4 - 6, 5 - 6, 4 - 5, 5 - 5, with the lower-ranking suit being longer or equal but stronger.

- The lower-ranking suit (in which the jump is being made in the 2nd round) has to be a 6-card with 2 HCs or stronger suit, or a 5-card suit with 3 top HCs.
- The higher-ranking opening suit may not be biddable, but it has to be at least a 4-card suit with minimum 1 HC.

Example:

<u>S</u>	<u>N</u>		<u>S</u>	<u>N</u>
1♠ - 2♣		or	1♥ - 2♣	
3♥ - ?			3♦ - ?	

- **Reverse** opening and rebid with 2-suit strong hands (15 - 16 HCp, 16 - 18 Tp) and better higher-ranking suit:
 - Open with the lower-ranking suit then, in the 2nd round, bid the higher-ranking suit without jump. It applies to hand distributions of the type 6 - 4, 6 - 5, 5 - 4 (rarely), 5 - 5, with the higher-ranking suit being longer or of equal length but stronger.
 - The higher-ranking suit (the 2nd bid suit) is usually a 6-card rebiddable suit (2 HCs) or a strong 5-card suit (3 HCs).
 - The lower-ranking opening suit may not be biddable, but it must be a 4-card (rarely) or a 5-card suit with +1 HC.

Example:

<u>S</u>	<u>N</u>		<u>S</u>	<u>N</u>
1♦ - 2♣		or	1♥ - 2♣	
2♥ - ?			2♠ - ?	

The strong Canapé and the reverse require +10 cards in the two suits, the second suit being stronger and/or longer. If the 2nd suit is only a 5-card suit, then it has to be strong (3 HCs). Very rarely are these bidding approaches used with only 9 cards, only when the high card points of the hand are concentrated in the respective two suits.

Summary for the case of responder's Canapé bids with a strong hand:

The requirements for the use of strong Canapé or reverse by the responder are slightly more relaxed:

- Responder's strong hands start at +12 HCp (+13 Tp), not in the range of 15 - 16 HCp (16 - 18 Tp) like in the opener's case.
- If the 2nd suit is a 5-card suit, then it could be only a rebiddable suit (2 HCs), not necessarily a strong suit (3 HCs).
- The responder can initiate the respective bidding sequence with a "false" 3-card suit (c/w 1 HC), or even with only Ax or Kx.

The Canapé style of bidding 2-suit hands has some advantages and disadvantages compared to the 5-card major style.

Advantages of the Canapé style:

- It emphasizes the major suits by using +4-card major suit openings. This means that the Blue Club system allows opening with one of a major more often than other systems. This in itself has a few advantages, such as:
 - It may "steal" the opponents' bid of that major suit, leading them to a bad contract or to a "pass"
 - It allows for a quick finding of a 4 - 4 fit in a major, approach that gives less information to the opponents
- It provides a precise description of the hand strength
- It offers a second alternative for a good contract with a 5 - 3 fit, if a 4 - 4 fit is not quickly found.
- It has preemptive value because the openings in a major happen more often now, when only four cards are needed.
- It is competitive, keeping the longer, +5-card suit in reserve for bidding competitively at 2- or 3-level.

- It makes opposition's defense play more difficult because the 2nd, possibly better suit of the opener, may not be mentioned during the auction and get a lead in it.

Disadvantages of the Canapé style:

- It does not allow finding quickly a 5 - 3 fit, as the responder does not know if the first suit bid by the opener is a 4- or a 5-card suit.
- It may force the responder to bid with a very weak hand (less than 5 HCp, 6 Tp) and without a 4-card fit (or 3 cards c/w 2 HCs) if his right hand opponent passes.
- The 1♣ opening with a biddable club suit cannot be used in Blue Club for starting a reverse because this opening is reserved for very strong hands (+17 HCp, +19 Tp).

Other principles and approaches of the Blue Club system, including those used by the simpler style presented in this book are:

- The principle of "fast arrival": once one of the pair's players knows that the strength of the combined hands is enough for bidding a game but no more, he should bid that game. This is usually a "write-off" bid and it shows that the combined strength is not enough to pursue the bidding any further. This allows for using the step approach bidding to show stronger hands with which it may be worth it to explore a slam.
- The principle of "anticipation": the opener (but also the responder) should try to anticipate what his partner's next bid may be and make his 1st bid accordingly, being prepared for the partner's response. This principle was introduced for the first time under a slightly different format by Ely Culbertson in 1930s and it is common to other bidding system, too.
- The use of 4-card major openings, as it was already mentioned. In this way, the system emphasizes the play in the major suits. It also has a preemptive value as the opponents are forced now to bid a lower-rank suit at 2-level, which may be inconvenient.

- The use of standard 1NT opening (15 - 17 HCp) and responses. The original Blue Club system uses the wide range (13 - 17 HCp) 1NT opening. This allows the opening of certain hands with a long club suit and it also has good preemptive value, creating difficulties to the intervening team. However, this advantage may be overshadowed by the complexity brought to the bidding system. Consequently, the wide range 1NT opening is not included in the style presented in this book.
- Occasional bid of a 3-card minor suit by the responder (not by the opener) in preparation for a reverse, as mentioned previously (Canapé style).
- Occasional opening with a 3-card diamond suit of one-suit hands that have a biddable club suit. These hands cannot be opened with 1♣ because this opening is reserved for very strong hands, neither with 2♣/3♣ because the club suit has to be strong, not only biddable.
- The use of 2♣ and 3♣ openings to describe 1- or 2-suit hands with a very good +5-card club suit (stronger than required for the 3-card diamond suit opening mentioned above).
- The response of 1/1 in a suit is usually forcing for 1 round. The responder may have only 3 cards in that suit in preparation for a Canapé bid, or a strong hand.

Exception: when the West and East opponents intervene and the bidding reaches a level too high for a safe contract of the South - North pair, then the South opener may pass a 1/1 response.

- The response of 2/1 in a suit promises usually a 2nd bid from the responder, except for the opener's rebid of 2NT in the 2nd round (showing a weak hand). This 2NT opener's rebid can be passed by the responder. Thus, the 2/1 response is forcing to at least 2NT. It shows a hand of +11 HCp, +12 Tp with a biddable +5-card suit. It can also be made with a 3-card suit in preparation for a reverse bid if the hand is strong (+12 HCp, +13 Tp).

Exception: the same as for the case of 1/1 response.

- The response with jump to 2NT after the opening of one of a suit shows a balanced hand with 11 - 12 HCp exactly, stoppers and no biddable suit at the proper level.

- The bid in the 2nd round by the opener or by the responder of a new suit can be non-forcing depending on the sequence (e.g.: weak bid of high rank - low rank suits by the opener or after a possibly weak response of the partner, refer to Chapter 5).
- The bid without jump of a suit at one step higher level shows (usually) a biddable +5-card suit. A notable exception is the case of the three-suited hands as we will see in the respective Chapter. In this case the 2nd 4-card suit needs to be very strong (3 top HCs).
- The approach to the takeout double is standard.
- The approach to the negative double is either standard or Sputnik, as agreed.
- The approach to preemptive opening and intervention bids are standard with the exception of 2♣ and 3♣ openings.
- The direct cue-bid of the opponent's suit shows a very strong hand (+17 HCp, +19 Tp) and 1st or 2nd round control in that suit. It is invitation to game. It is not the Michaels convention, although some players may prefer to play it this way.
- The bid of a new suit without jump after establishing the fit is a cue-bid showing control in the 1st or 2nd round in the respective new suit. It is usually forcing to game and invitation to slam except after a weak or limited bidding sequence of one of the partners. In this case the cue-bid is only invitation to game. This technique is used primarily when the trump suit is a major. It can also be used for minors when the bidding sequence is not ambiguous.
- The original Blue Club system uses a strong 2♦ opening for describing 17 - 24 HCp 3-suit hands of the type 4 - 4 - 4 - 1. As the frequency of this type of hands is small and the bidding development is complex, this opening is not included in the simpler style presented in this book.

The selection of an approach for bidding this type of hands is left to the players. Perhaps start the bidding with the approach presented in Chapter 6 for three-suit hands and show the strength later on.

- A 4-card suit is not rebiddable unless supported by the partner or with rare exception (e.g.: refer to 4 - 4 - 4 -1 weak hands case).
- The quality of the fit is a major consideration when exploring a slam.
- Continuously reevaluate the hand strength depending on the bidding development, opponents' intervention, etc. This is common to all of the bidding systems. Hand unbalance, auction development and other consideration may shift the hand between categories.

Example:

♠	K J x x x
♥	K
♦	A x x x x
♣	Q x

The hand has 13 HCp, however the ♥K and the ♣Qx have practically no HCp value for the opening bid. Hence, the hand is considered to have only 8 HCp. Adding 3 Dp, the hand has 11 Tp, which is still not enough to open the bidding.

If the partner opens with 1♥, then the ♥K is now worth its 3 HCp because it is guarded by the high cards of the partner's suit. The hand has now 11 HCp, 14 Tp. If the hearts become the trump suit, then the hand has only 1 Dp for the clubs doubleton and 12 Tp.

More common is the switch of the 15 HCp hands between strong and weak hand categories, depending on the concentration of high cards in the long suit(s). For this reason, they are included sometimes either in the weak or in the strong hand category.

The same comments regarding the initial hand evaluation and subsequent reevaluations apply to responses and rebids.

- Suit types:
 - biddable suits:
 - 4-card suits with two high cards (minimum QJxx or Q109x)
 - 5-card suits with minimum one top high card (minimum Axxxx or Kxxxx)
 - 6-card suit with minimum one lower high card (minimum Jxxxxx)

- rebiddable (twice biddable) suits
 - 5-card suits with two high cards (minimum QJxxx)
 - 6-card suits with A or K or two lower high cards
- strong or solid suits
 - expect to make 4 tricks in that suit with a support of only 2 cards (minimum KQJxx or KQ109x). Usually they have 3 HCs. This type of suits can be used for strong Canapé or reverse bidding of strong hands (15 - 16 HCp, 16 - 18 Tp).
- very strong or very solid suits
 - +5-card suits with 3 top HCs (e.g. AKQxx or AKJxx). Usually, this is a requirement for hands with only 15 HCp (16 Tp) and a suit of only 5 cards to be included in the strong hand category (15 - 16 HCp, 16 - 18 Tp) and be suitable for strong Canapé.
- self-supporting suits
 - +6-card suit with no losers, suit with which you would play comfortably a contract with only a singleton support at the partner (e.g. AKQJxx or AKQxxxx)
- Controls
 - Controls when cue-bidding:
 - first round control (or first control) = A or void
 - second round control (or second control) = K or singleton
 - Number of HC controls used for the responses to the artificial 1♣ strong opening:
 - A = 2 controls
 - K = 1 control
 - Voids and singletons are not counted in the case of the 1♣ opening

Some of the bidding approaches are different from those of other systems you may already know. Also, for simplifying and modernizing the system, some of the principles presented in this book are different from those of the original Blue Club system. These more specific bidding principles and approaches are presented at the beginning of each main Chapter or Section.

All of the principles and approaches, general or specific, are very important because they represent the basis for the bidding development in Blue Club. Once known well, the system becomes very logical, easy to understand, to learn and to use.

Based on the analysis of all these principles, some advantages and disadvantages of the Blue Club system can be inferred.

1.2. Advantages of the Blue Club System

- Effectiveness
- Purposely built, making it logical and consistent by design. Other systems evolved over the years, becoming complicated and convoluted, with many additional conventions when played at a higher competitive level.
- The wide range of 1NT opening (13 - 17 HCp) has a preemptive value. This advantage does not exist in this simplified version of Blue Club presented in this book because it uses the standard 15 - 17 HCp 1NT opening and bid development.
- The advantages of the Canapé system.
- The use of the strong 1♣ opening allows for more precise investigation of a slam possibility. This is a very important item in many types of competitions (e.g.: team matches, IMP scoring, etc.).
- Once the principles and the requirements for various bidding cases are well understood and learned, the bidding sequences become very logical, precise and mostly natural. Hence, they are easy to learn, without the need of memorizing entire sequences. This is one of the main strengths of the system and it cannot be emphasized enough.

- The system is less stressful. As mentioned in Terence Reese's "The Blue Club" book, *"...there is little room for choice..."*. The players do not have to choose from many options when bidding a hand. The bidding sequence itself leads to the proper call without the need for a lot of judgment to choose from many options.
- The modern "standard" systems tend to use extensively many kinds of doubles and redoubles (more than 30). This provides more bidding space for the precise description of hands when using the Blue Club system because they do not raise the bidding level. Some of these doubles and redoubles can be included in this system, although only a few are addressed in this book.

1.3. Disadvantages of the Blue Club System

- The use of high-card points only, approach that may lead to missing contracts with unbalanced hands and less than minimum high card points required for opening (12 HCp).

This disadvantage does not exist in the Blue Club style described in this book because it uses both high cards and distribution points.

- The wide range of 1NT opening (13 - 17 HCp) makes it more difficult for the responder to assess quickly the opener's hand. This requires more probing and bidding space which could be difficult, particularly in competitions.

This disadvantage does not exist in the Mississauga style described in this book because it uses the standard 15 - 17 HCp 1NT opening and bid development.

- The complicated and convoluted bidding of the 4 - 4 - 4 - 1 strong hands.

This disadvantage does not exist in the Mississauga style of Blue Club system described in this book because the respective bidding approach is not used.

- The strong 1♣ opening allows the opponents to realize at a low bidding level that the opener has a strong hand. This makes it vulnerable to quick preemptive bids from the opponents. The opponents also have bidding space for preemptive bids. This is particularly true when the vulnerability is not favorable for the opener's partnership.
- The disadvantages of the Canapé style.

Quiz

- 1.1 What are the three main principles of this simpler Blue Club style?
- 1.2 What is the point-range of weak and of strong hands when opening with one of a suit?
- 1.3 What is the Canapé style of bidding?
- 1.4 How do you bid a weak two-suit hand?
- 1.5 When is strong Canapé being used and how do you use it?
- 1.6 When is reverse bidding being used and how do you use it?
- 1.7 Name two main differences of the Mississauga style compared to the original Blue Club system.
- 1.8 What is a biddable suit?
- 1.9 What is a rebiddable suit?
- 1.10 What is a very strong suit?
- 1.11 When can a 3-card suit be bid?
- 1.12 When can a 4-card suit be rebid?
- 1.13 What are controls?
- 1.14 Name the 2nd round controls.

"Blue Club is not difficult to learn and is the most pleasant and rewarding system to play" - Omar Sharif

Chapter 2 – One-suit Weak Hands Opening and Rebids

2.1. Principles and Approaches

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the Blue Club style presented in this book accounts for the hand distribution and it uses both high-card points (HCp) and distribution points (Dp).

Based on this postulate, here there are a few principles and approaches applicable to the opening and rebids of one-suit weak hands:

- Strength of weak opening hands 12 - 14 HCp (13 - 15 Tp)
- Opener's 2nd time bid of the same opening suit after a 2/1 response does not necessarily show a weak hand. The responder promised to bid once more and the opener can show the strength subsequently.
- Opener's rebid in notrump does not necessarily show a balanced hand. It can have a singleton in partner's suit.
- Opener's rebid of 2NT without jump is not a limited bid except after 2/1 response.
- Some hands of 15 HCp (16 Tp) are shifted to the weak category depending on the hand structure and high cards distribution.
- Continuously reevaluate the strength of the hand, depending mainly on the partner's bid, but not only. This is common to all the bidding systems.

One-suit weak hands can be balanced or unbalanced, with or without long club suit. All of these four cases are analyzed in the following sections.

These principles do not apply to the 1♣ opening, which is a strong, artificial opening.

The meaning of the respective responses is presented in Chapter 7.

2.2. Balanced Hands (4 - 3 - 3 - 3) without 4-card Club Suit

The opening of such hands is with the 4-card suit except for the club suit. The opener's rebid in the 2nd round is either pass or in NT at minimum level to show a balanced hand and weakness.

The 15 HCp hands without stoppers in at least 3 suits are also included in this category because they cannot be used for the standard 1NT opening due to the lack of stoppers.

The discussion here is based only on high card points because a 4 - 3 - 3 - 3 hand has no distribution points.

- Opening:
 - one of the 4-card suit (except for clubs), even if not biddable. Also, open with one of the 4-card suit with 15 HCp but without stoppers in at least 3 suits, hands that are not opened with 1NT.
- Opener's rebids in the 2nd round:

The general approach is to rebid in notrump or pass to show the balanced and weak hand. There is one exception: after a response of 2/1 in a suit, the opener can make a stronger bid in the 2nd round with a 14 - 15 HCp.

- over simple raise: - pass
- over 1NT response: - pass
- over 2NT response: - pass, or
- 3NT with maximum strength (14 HCp) and stoppers
- over 1/1 response: - 1NT, or
- simple raise of responder's major with support and strength (14 - 15 HCp). Invitation to game.
- over 2/1 response: - 2NT with 12 - 13 HCp, or

- 3NT with strength (14 HCp) and stoppers
(with 15 HCp and stoppers he would open 1NT), or
- simple raise of responder's major with support and strength (14 - 15 HCp). Invitation to game.

The simple raise of the responder's suit over 1/1 or 2/1 response is done only if the responder's suit was a major because the response in a minor could be with only 3 cards, in preparation for a reverse bid by the responder (refer to Chapter 1 and Chapter 7).

The 2/1 response promises +11 HCp (or +12 Tp). Thus the opener can invite to game with 14 HCp or even bid 3NT if he has stoppers in the other unbid suits and high spot cards.

Summary: one-suit weak (12 - 14 HCp, 13 - 15 Tp) balanced hand (4 - 3 - 3 - 3) w/o long club suit

Opening	Response	Opener's Rebid
1 of the 4-card suit even if not biddable	simple raise	pass
	1NT	pass
	2NT	pass
		3NT 14 HCp and stoppers
	1/1	1NT
		simple raise of a major good support and maximum strength (14 - 15 HCp). Invitation to game.
	2/1	
		2NT 12 - 13 HCp
		3NT 14 HCp, stoppers on other 3 suits
		simple raise of a major good support and maximum strength (14 - 15 HCp). Invitation to game.

Examples:

Example 2-1

♠ Q J x x
♥ A J x
♦ K Q x
♣ x x x

Example 2-2

♠ J x x
♥ A J x
♦ Q x x x
♣ A x x

Example 2-3

♠ A J x
♥ Q J x x
♦ Q J x
♣ K x x

Example 2-1: hand of 13 HCp with 4-card spade suit. Open 1♠ and then, depending on the response:

<u>S</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>S</u>
1♠ - 1NT	-	pass
1♠ - 2NT	-	pass
1♠ - 2♣/2♦	-	2NT
1♠ - 2♥	-	2NT
1♠ - 2♠	-	pass

Example 2-2: hand of 12 HCp with 4-card weak diamond suit. Open 1♦ and then, depending on the response:

<u>S</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>S</u>
1♦ - 1NT	-	pass
1♦ - 2NT	-	pass
1♦ - 1♥/1♠	-	1NT
1♦ - 2♣	-	2NT
1♦ - 2♦	-	pass

Example 2-3: hand of 14 HCp with 4-card heart suit. Open 1♥ and then, depending on the response:

<u>S</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>S</u>
1♥ - 1NT	-	pass
1♥ - 2NT	-	3NT
1♥ - 1♠	-	1NT or 2♠
<i>Note: ♠AK or ♠AQ would be better for 2♠</i>		
1♥ - 2♣/2♦	-	3NT
1♥ - 2♥	-	pass

The response of 2NT promises 11 - 12 HCp exactly, balanced hand and stoppers in the unbid suits. Thus, the pair is in the 3NT game range (25 - 26 HCp) and the opener rebids 3NT with his 14 HCp.

The response of 2♣/2♦ promises +11 HCp, +12 Tp and the pair is in the game range. Consequently, the opener's rebid is 3NT over the 2♣/2♦ response, showing 14 HCp, a balanced hand and stoppers. If the responder's 2♣/2♦ was a preparation for a reverse bidding of a major, he can correct subsequently to 4 of that major knowing that he will find support in opener's balanced hand.

The other rebids of the opener are straightforward.

2.3. Balanced Hands (4 - 3 - 3 - 3) with 4-card Club Suit

The original Blue Club system uses the wide-range 1NT opening for this type of weak hands, depending on stoppers and vulnerability. However, the Mississauga style presented in this book uses the standard 15 - 17 HCp 1NT opening, not the wide range 13 - 17 HCp. Consequently, the 1NT opening is not used anymore for this type of hands, simplifying the system.

These hands are usually opened with 1♦ because the 1♣ opening is artificial and the 2♣ opening requires a long and strong club suit.

Consequently:

- Opening:
 - 1♦ with: 12 HCp and 3-card diamond suit c/w 1 HC
 - 1♦ with: 13 - 14 HCp and 3-card diamond suit w/o 1 HC
or 15 HCp w/o stoppers in three suits
 - pass with: 12 HCp and 3-card diamond suit w/o 1 HC
- Opener's rebids in the 2nd round:

The opener's rebids are the same as for weak balanced hands, Section 2.2.

Examples:

Example 2-4

♠ Q x x
♥ A Q x
♦ Q x x
♣ Q x x x

Example 2-5

♠ K Q x
♥ A J x
♦ x x x
♣ A x x x

Example 2-6

♠ A x x
♥ A J x
♦ x x x
♣ K x x x

Example 2-4: hand of 12 HCp with 4-card club suit and 3 diamonds c/w 1 HC. Open 1♦ and then, depending on the response, rebid as it follows:

<u>S</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>S</u>
1♦ - 1NT	- pass	
1♦ - 2NT	- pass	
1♦ - 2♣	- 2NT	
1♦ - 1♥/1♠	- 1NT	
1♦ - 2♦	- pass	

The simple raise response of 2♦ was made with a 5-card biddable diamond suit or a very strong 4-card diamond suit because the responder knows that the opening of 1♦ could have been made with only three cards in diamonds (and a long club suit). Consequently, the opener can pass the response of 2♦, knowing that he will find a fit in diamonds at the responder.

Example 2-5: hand of 14 HCp with 4-card club suit and 3 diamonds w/o 1 HC. Open 1♦ and then, depending on the response, rebid as it follows:

<u>S</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>S</u>
1♦ - 1NT	- pass	
1♦ - 2NT	- 3NT	
1♦ - 2♣	- 3NT	
1♦ - 1♥/1♠	- 1NT	
1♦ - 2♦	- pass	

Regarding the sequence 1♦ - 2♣ - 3NT, the opener's rebid of 3NT is justified because the response of 2♣ promises + 11 HCp or +12 Tp and:

- if it is a preparation for a strong reverse in a major, then the responder can correct the 3NT to 4 of that major, knowing that the opener's hand is balanced and he will find support in that major, or
- if it is a true +5-card club suit, then the responder should still have a stopper in the diamond suit among the points he promised. Also, the long club suit will bring many tricks in a notrump play, compensating for the pair's combined strength possibly at the lower limit of the 3NT game range (the responder may have only 9 - 10 HCp, but +12 Tp with a long club suit to justify his 2/1 response).

Example 2-6: hand of 12 HCp (12 Tp) with 4-card club suit and 3 diamonds w/o 1 HC. This hand has minimum strength does not have a high card in the diamond suit and the club suit is weak. Thus, better "pass" it.

2.4. Unbalanced Hands (5-card or 6-card suit) without Long Club Suit

This type of hands is fairly common and the bidding is natural.

Being unbalanced, the hands have distribution points that need to be taken into account.

- Opening
 - one of the long suit
- Opener's rebids with a 5-card suit in the 2nd round:
 - over simple raise - pass
 - over 1NT response: - pass with 12 - 14 HCp (13 - 15 Tp), or
- rebid the long suit with 14 HCp (15 Tp) and strong suit (3 HCs).
 - over 2NT response: - pass or rebid the long suit or jump to game depending on the hand and HCp distribution, suit strength.

- over 1/1 response:
 - rebid the long suit if it is strong, or
 - support responder's suit with very good support, or
 - 1NT if no void and the doubleton is in the partner's suit
- over 2/1 response:
 - rebid the long suit (compulsory)

With a 6-card suit and weak hand, the opener always rebids that suit (except for a simple raise response, when he passes). The responder's suit can be supported in the 3rd round.

Summary: one-suit weak (12 - 14 HCp, 13 - 15 Tp), unbalanced hands (5-card or 6-card suit) without long club suit

Opening	Response	Opener's Rebid
1 of the long suit	simple raise	pass
	1NT	pass
		rebid the long suit
		14 HCp (15 Tp) and strong suit
	2NT	pass
		rebid the long suit
		jump to game
	1/1	rebid the long suit
		support responder's suit
		1 NT
		the doubleton is in responder's suit
	2/1	rebid the long suit
		compulsory

Examples:

Example 2-7

♠ K Q x x x
♥ Q J x
♦ Q 10 x
♣ A x

Example 2-8

♠ A K J x x
♥ A J x
♦ x x x
♣ x x

Example 2-7: hand of 14 HCp (15 Tp) with 5-card rebiddable spade suit and stoppers in all the suits. Open 1♠ and then, depending on the response:

<u>S</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>S</u>
1♠ - 1NT	-	pass
1♠ - 2NT	-	3NT
1♠ - 2♣/2♦	-	2♠
1♠ - 2♥	-	4♥
1♠ - 2♠	-	pass

The response of 2NT shows a balanced hand with 11 - 12 HCp and stoppers (refer to Chapter 7). Hence, with a total of 25 - 26 HCp, balanced and stoppers, the opener bids the game in 3NT.

The response of 2♣/2♦ over the 1♠ opening promises +11 HCp, +12 Tp and a 2nd bid from the responder. The response could also have been made with only 3 cards in clubs or diamonds, in preparation for a reverse. Thus, even if the pair has enough points for a game, it is compulsory for the opener to rebid his spade suit and wait for the responder to make his promised 2nd bid describing more precisely his hand.

The response of 2♥ (2/1) promises +5-card biddable heart suit and +12 Tp (refer to Chapter 7). Thus, the opener bids the game in hearts showing a +3-card (c/w +1HC) fit. If the responder is very strong, he may continue the bidding exploring the slam.

Example 2-8: hand of 13 HCp (14 Tp) with a 5-card rebiddable strong spade suit and without stoppers in two suits. Open 1♠ and then, depending on the response:

<u>S</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>S</u>
1♠ - 1NT	- pass	
1♠ - 2NT	- 3♠	
1♠ - 2♣/2♦	- 2♠	
1♠ - 2♥	- 4♥	
1♠ - 2♠	- pass	

The response of 2NT promises a balanced hand with 11 - 12 HCp and stoppers. Consequently, the pair has 24 - 25 HCp, not quite yet in the range of a 3NT game contract. In addition, the opener's hand does not have stoppers in two suits, and thus a contract in notrump is not favorable.

However, if he finds a 3-card fit for his spades in partner's hand, he can take into consideration the 1 Dp in the club suit and now the pair would have 25 - 26 Tp. This is in the game range for a contract in a major suit. Hence, he rebids the spade suit at 3-level showing his 5-card rebiddable spade suit and inviting to game in spades.

Example 2-9

♠ x
♥ K J x
♦ A Q J x x x
♣ K 10 x

Example 2-10

♠ K Q 10
♥ K x
♦ Q J x x x
♣ K x x

Example 2-9: hand of 14 HCp (16 Tp) with 6-card strong diamond suit, stoppers in three suits and a singleton in spades. Open 1♦ and then, depending on the response:

<u>S</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>S</u>
1♦ - 1NT	- 2♦	
1♦ - 2NT	- 5♦	
1♦ - 2♣	- 3♦	
1♦ - 1♥/1♠	- 2♦	
1♦ - 2♦	- pass	

This hand illustrates well the importance of accounting for distribution points. The response of 2NT promises 11 - 12 HCp exactly and stoppers in the other three unbid suits. Accounting for HCp only, the combined strength is 25 - 26 HCp, in the range of a 3NT game contract. However, a notrump contract may not be good due to the

singleton. If the distribution points are accounted for, the pair has 28 - 29 Tp which is in the range of a game contract in a minor. Hence, the opener's rebid is 5♦.

It should be noted that the hand could also be included in the strong category when accounting for the distribution points (16 Tp), although it would be at the lower limit of the respective point-range.

Example 2-10: hand of 13 HCp (14 Tp), accounting for the downgrade of the unguarded ♥K. It has a 5-card rebiddable diamond suit and stoppers in three suits. Open 1♦ and then, depending on the response:

<u>S</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>S</u>
1♦ - 1NT	- pass	
1♦ - 2NT	- 3NT	
1♦ - 2♣	- 2♦	
1♦ - 1♥	- 1NT	
1♦ - 1♠	- 2♠	
1♦ - 2♦	- pass	

The response of 2NT promises a balanced hand with 11 - 12 HCp and stoppers in the unbid suits. The ♥K is fully counted now because it is guarded by the partner's balanced hand with stopper in it. Thus, the pair is now in the 25 - 26 HCp game range and the opener rebid is 3NT.

The response of 1♥ is in the opener's doubleton. With stoppers in the other unbid suits he prefers to bid in notrump (1NT) rather than rebidding the diamonds, although the diamond suit is rebiddable. Without knowing how strong the responder's hand is, the opener prefers to leave open the possibility of a contract in notrump and for going to game if the responder has +11 HCp.

The response of 1♠ promises a +4-card biddable suit. The opener prefers to support responder's suit with a very strong 3-card spade suit rather than make a very weak rebid in diamonds. Although the fit may have only 7 cards, the support is very strong (3 HCs). This opens the possibility of a contract in a major rather than in a minor, and perhaps even for a game. The 2♠ opener's rebid also preempts a possible 2♥ intervention of the opponents.

2.5. Unbalanced Hands (5-card or 6-card suit) with Long Club Suit

This becomes a special case because the opening of 1♣ is ruled out, being an artificial strong bid that has nothing to do with a long club suit. Consequently, a different bidding approach is being used, as it follows:

- Opening:
 - 1♦ - 12 - 14 HCp (13 - 15 Tp), 5-card clubs, 3 diamonds
 - pass - 12 HCp (13 Tp), 5-card club suit, only 2 diamonds, no 4-card biddable major

The original Blue Club system would open the hands of 13 - 14 HCp, 5-card club suit and 2 diamonds with 1NT. Because of the elimination of the wide range 1NT opening, this becomes a "gray" bidding area that would need to be tuned up by the players themselves, depending on various factors.

Suggestions:

- 1♦ - 13 HCp (14 Tp) and Ax or Kx of diamonds
- 1NT (standard) - 14 HCp, the doubleton is Ax or Kx, stoppers
- 2♣ - 13 - 14 HCp (14 - 15 Tp) and strong 5-card club suit
- Opener's rebids in the 2nd round:
 - after 1♦ opening and response of 1/1 or 1NT: - always 2♣
 - after 1♦ opening and response of 2/1 or 2NT: - always 3♣
 - after 1NT opening: - standard
 - after 2♣ opening: - refer to Chapter 9

Summary: one-suit weak (12 - 14 HCp, 13 - 15 Tp), unbalanced hands (5-card or 6-card suit) with long club suit

Opening	Response	Opener's Rebid
pass (12 HCp, 13 Tp) +5-card clubs, -2 diamonds	N/A	N/A
1♦ (12 - 14 HCP, 13 - 15 Tp) +5-card clubs, 3 diamonds	1/1	2♣
	1NT	
	2/1	3♣
	2NT	
1NT (14 HCp) stoppers, Ax or Kx	standard	standard
2♣ (13 - 14 HCp, 14 - 15 Tp) +5-card strong clubs	refer to Chapter 9	refer to Chapter 9

Examples:

Example 2-1

♠ K Q x
♥ J x
♦ Q 10 x
♣ A x x x x

Example 2-12

♠ K Q x
♥ J x
♦ Q x x
♣ A Q x x x

Example 2-11: hand of 11 HCp and 12 Tp (♥J not accounted for) with 5-card weak club. The hand is too weak to open even if the 1 Dp is taken into consideration. Thus, pass.

Example 2-12: hand of 13 HCp (14 Tp) with 5-card rebiddable club suit and 3 diamonds with 1 HC. Open 1♦ and then, depending on the response:

<u>S</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>S</u>
1♦ - 1NT	-	2♣
1♦ - 2NT	-	3♣
1♦ - 2♣	-	3♣
1♦ - 1♥/1♠	-	2♣
1♦ - 2♦	-	3♣

Example 2-13

♠ Q x x
♥ K Q x
♦ Q x
♣ A Q J x x

Example 2-14

♠ A x
♥ K J x
♦ K Q x
♣ Q 10 x x x

Example 2-13: hand of 14 HCp and 15 Tp (♦Q not accounted for) with 5-card strong club suit and no stopper in the spade suit. Open 2♣ (refer to Chapter 9 for responses and rebids).

Example 2-14: hand of 15 HCp (16 Tp) with 5-card weak club suit and Ax stopper in the doubleton spade suit. Open 1NT. The responses and opener's rebids are standard following the standard 1NT opening approach.

Quiz

- 2.1 What is the point-range of weak hand openings?
- 2.2 Does opener's rebid in notrump promise a balanced hand or not?
- 2.3 What do you open and rebid over simple raise, 1/1, 2/1, 1NT and 2NT response with the following hands:

Q - 2.3a

♠ Q x x x
♥ A x x
♦ Q J x
♣ K x x

Q - 2.3b

♠ K Q x x
♥ K J x
♦ Q x x
♣ K x x

Q - 2.3c

♠ J x x
♥ K J x
♦ K J x
♣ Q J x x

Q - 2.3d

♠ J x x
♥ A Q x
♦ K Q x
♣ Q J x x

Q - 2.3e

♠ A Q x
♥ A x
♦ x x x
♣ K x x x x

Q - 2.3f

♠ J x x
♥ K J x
♦ Q x
♣ A J x x x

Q - 2.3g

♠ J x x
♥ K J x
♦ A x
♣ K J x x x

Q - 2.3h

♠ A x
♥ x x x
♦ K Q x x x
♣ Q J 10

Interesting facts: *Benito Garozzo was elected to the European Bridge League Hall of Fame in 2017 at the age of 90*

SIMPLER, MODERNIZED BLUE CLUB SYSTEM

Mississauga Style

Strong club bidding systems dominated the world of bridge until a couple of decades ago. The reason? "...*they think for you...*", as the experts say. The experts are right: the systems are accurate and if you stick to the rules, they lead you effortlessly to the right decision. The draw back? They are complicated.

This book presents a simplified and modernized version of one of the most successful bidding systems of all times, the Blue Team Club. One of the main modifications is the use of both high card and distribution points in the evaluation of the hand strength, not only of the high card points.

Benito Garozzo, the creator of the original Blue Club system, says in his foreword: *"The simplifications and the introduction of some standard bidding make it easier to learn the system, to remember it and use it, but still keep it precise..... I believe the way in which the book presents the system is the best way, logical and well structured. Thus, the book is excellent for bridge players that want to learn about and try a "strong club" system to become more competitive."*



Dan playing competitive bridge in the early 1970's

Dan Berkley is a Canadian professional consulting engineer who made a passion for bridge in the late 1960's. He made time to run bridge clubs, play and teach bridge online and offline.

He is an ACBL Accredited Bridge teacher and an Accredited *"Learn Bridge in One Day?"* instructor, teaching Standard American and his simplified and modernized version of Blue Club.

His previous book *"Bridge - A Beginner's Guide"* was reviewed as the best eBook for beginners by the Learning Bridge website.

Dan can be reached through his website:
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