

BRIDGE

Number: 177

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September 2017

Bernard Magee's Acol Bidding Quiz

This month we are dealing with hands with two long suits. You are West in the auctions below, playing 'Standard Acol' with a weak no-trump (12-14 points) and four-card majors.

1. Dealer West. Game All.

♠ J 7 6 5 4 3
♥ Q 8 6 4 2
♦ A Q
♣ Void



West	North	East	South
?			

2. Dealer West. Love All.

♠ A 8
♥ K Q 4 3 2
♦ A K 8 7 2
♣ 2



West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
?			

3. Dealer East. Love All.

♠ Void
♥ K 7 6 4 2
♦ K 9 8 7 6
♣ Q 4 3



West	North	East	South
?		1♠	Pass

Answers on page 41

4. Dealer East. Love All.

♠ A 8 7 6 5
♥ 9 3
♦ K Q 8 6 2
♣ 2



West	North	East	South
		1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
?			

5. Dealer East. Love All.

♠ K Q J 8 7
♥ A K
♦ Q J 6 4 3
♣ 6



West	North	East	South
		1NT	Pass
2♥ ¹	Pass	2♠	Pass
?			¹ Transfer to spades

6. Dealer South. Love All.

♠ A K 8 7 6
♥ J 10 9 7 6
♦ A K
♣ 2



West	North	East	South
?			3♦

Answers on page 43

7. Dealer West. Love All.

♠ 3
♥ A K Q 3 2
♦ A J 5 4 2
♣ 7 5



West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2♥	3♠
?			

8. Dealer East. E/W Game.

♠ 7 3 2
♥ A K 8 4 3
♦ 5 2
♣ K J 4



West	North	East	South
2♥	3♠	1♠	1♠
?		4♥	4♠

9. Dealer North. N/S Game.

♠ A 7 6
♥ J 10 9 8 7
♦ 4 3
♣ 6 5 2



West	North	East	South
?	1♥	1♠	2♥

Answers on page 45

10. Dealer West. Love All.

♠ 7 6
♥ K Q 8 7 6
♦ A K 8 3 2
♣ 2



West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2♣	2♠
?			

11. Dealer West. N/S Game.

♠ Void
♥ K Q 8 7 6
♦ Q J 4
♣ A Q 8 7 6



West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2♣	2♠
?			

12. Dealer East. Love All.

♠ A 9 8 7 6 5
♥ 7
♦ Void
♣ Q 9 8 7 6 5



West	North	East	South
1♠	2♦	1♥	Dbl
?		2♥	3♦

Answers on page 47

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THE AEGEAN EXPERIENCE

ATHENS to ATHENS 9 DAYS from £1,795pp April 30, 2018

After leaving Piraeus our first port of call is Hydra. Enjoy some time at leisure exploring this true gem. Here donkeys, not cars and scooters, rule. Next visit Santorini, with its dramatic volcanic landscape and whitewashed towns that cling to the cliff edges. Here there is the opportunity to see the Minoan site of Akrotiri that was wonderfully well-preserved beneath volcanic ash. The following day in Crete, learn more about another legendary destination, the Minotaur's labyrinth, hidden beneath the Palace of Knossos.

After a maiden call at Karpathos, the second largest of the Greek Dodecanese Islands, we head northeast to Rhodes. Here you can visit the Acropolis of Lindos, and the Palace of the Grand Master of the Knights of Rhodes Town. After another maiden call at Nisyros and a visit to the incredible Stefanos Crater, step ashore on the sacred island of Delos, birthplace of Achilles, to visit its famous ancient ruins before relaxing on the waterfront in beautiful Mykonos.

YOUR ITINERARY

APR 30	Fly to ATHENS Greece Embark <i>Aegean Odyssey</i> in nearby Piraeus
MAY 1	HYDRA Greek Islands ⚓
MAY 2	SANTORINI Greek Islands ⚓
MAY 3	HERAKLION Crete, Greek Islands
MAY 4	KARPATOS Greek Islands ⚓
MAY 5	RHODES Greek Islands
MAY 6	NISYROS Greek Islands ⚓
MAY 7	DELOS Greek Islands ⚓ MYKONOS Greek Islands ⚓
MAY 8	PIRAEUS Greece Disembark <i>Aegean Odyssey</i> and transfer to Athens Airport

AEG180430BR

VOYAGE HIGHLIGHTS

- The Minotaur's labyrinth of Knossos
- The wild mountains of Karpathos
- Relax in the cafés of Mykonos
- The Terrace of the Lions at Delos
- Maiden calls at Nisyros and Karpathos



Rhodes



Mykonos



Santorini



Delos

Odyssey Club members receive an additional 5% discount



VOYAGES TO ANTIQUITY

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BRIDGE

Ryden Grange, Knaphill,
Surrey GU21 2TH

☎ 01483 489961

bridge@mrbridge.co.uk

www.mrbridge.co.uk

shop: www.mrbridge.co.uk/
mrbridge-shop

**Publisher and
Managing Editor**
Mr Bridge

Bridge Consultant
Bernard Magee
bernardmagee
@mrbridge.co.uk

Cartoons & Illustrations
Marguerite Lihou
www.margueritelihou.co.uk

Technical Consultant
Tony Gordon

Typesetting & Design
Ruth Edmondson
ruth@mrbridge.co.uk

Proof Readers
Julian Pottage
Mike Orriel
Catrina Shackleton
Richard Wheen

Customer Services
Catrina Shackleton
catrina@mrbridge.co.uk

Events & Cruises
☎ 01483 489961
Jessica Galt
jessica@mrbridge.co.uk
Megan Riccio
megan@mrbridge.co.uk
Sophie Pierrepont
sophie@mrbridge.co.uk

Clubs & Charities
Maggie Axtell
maggie@mrbridge.co.uk

Address Changes
☎ 01483 485342
Elizabeth Bryan
elizabeth@mrbridge.co.uk

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Pompeii

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Sail from the canals of Venice to the "Eternal City" of Rome, two of the greatest destinations in the world. See the Renaissance treasures of Urbino, birthplace of Raphael. Explore the Roman history of Split, where the Palace of Diocletian occupies half the city. Walk the walls of Dubrovnik and discover ancient Lecce at the heel of Italy's boot.

Butrint in Albania is a rich repository of the past, as is the Graeco-Roman theatre at Taormina. Cruise through the Strait of Messina to Salerno on the Amalfi Coast, where legend has it that Paestum was founded by Jason of Argonauts fame, before arriving at the most famous archaeological sites in history, Pompeii or nearby Herculaneum.



Venice

VOYAGE HIGHLIGHTS

- Overnight in Venice
- See the Renaissance treasures of Urbino
- Cruise the Dalmatian coast
- See volcanic Mount Etna in Sicily and Stromboli
- Explore Pompeii or Herculaneum



Dubrovnik

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YOUR ITINERARY

MAY 18	Fly to VENICE Italy Transfer to <i>Aegean Odyssey</i>	O
MAY 19	VENICE Italy	
MAY 20	URBINO Italy (from Ancona)	
MAY 21	SPLIT Croatia	
MAY 22	DUBROVNIK Croatia ⚓	
MAY 23	LECCE Italy (from Brindisi)	
MAY 24	CORFU Greek Islands SARANDE Albania	
MAY 25	AT SEA	
MAY 26	TAORMINA Sicily ⚓	
MAY 27	SALERNO Italy SORRENTO Italy ⚓	O
MAY 28	SORRENTO Italy ⚓	O
MAY 29	SORRENTO Italy ⚓	
MAY 30	ROME Italy Disembark <i>Aegean Odyssey</i> in Civitavecchia and transfer to Rome Airport	

AEG180518BR

Key to symbols

O Overnight stay in port ⚓ Ship at anchor



Urbino



Corfu



VOYAGES TO ANTIQUITY

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Fare shown is per person and subject to availability. Single cabins are subject to availability and select grades only. Please see brochure or website for full details.
Ship's registry: Panama.



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Call **Mr Bridge** on 01483 489961 or visit www.mrbridge.co.uk



HAPPY COUPLE No. 1

Here, as promised in these columns last month, is a photograph of Bernard and Helen Magee on their special day, 8 July 2017.



©Studio GD Photography 2017

HAPPY COUPLE No 2



©yellowsnapper

The day after Bernard and Helen's wedding, we went to Camberley Heath Golf Club for a luncheon celebration of Brian and Diana Holland's Diamond Wedding. Sixty great years. Guests known to me included Robin and Christine Kent, Richard and Carol (Brailley) Smithson, Brian and Joan Griffiths, Mike and Sheila Watts, Miriam Finn, Elizabeth Marr and helpers at Rubber/Chicago in the early days of Mr Bridge, Fran Bennie and Viv Fleury.

30TH CELEBRATION

Readers will be aware that I have spent many months talking about my forthcoming 30th anniversary celebrations. Our inaugural river boat cruises in particular, hosted by Bernard Magee as well as Aegean Odyssey voyages in September, October and November with yours truly on board.

All the sailings have been well supported but the best laid schemes of mice and men do sometimes go awry. Sadly, due to a recently diagnosed bladder cancer, I cannot join in any of these parties as I have to undergo radio and chemotherapy.

Furthermore, I have been advised to focus all my energy on getting well, completing the treatment and thereafter rebuilding my strength. All the while being patient, no pun intended.

QPLUS 12



Once again it is that time of year. The world bridge computer championships are in Lyon, France this year. They will be over by the time this issue lands on your doorstep. Be assured, Johannes Leber, pictured above, once again travels full of hope as he always does. 'What other way is there to travel?' I hear him mumble. Quite So.

DOWN THE DANUBE

There are still some cabins available for both this years October sailings

on ms. Serenity. Single occupancy of a twin bedded cabin is available at a supplement of 25%.

2018 DIARIES



These are now in stock. They have lovely soft luxury kidrell covers with a ball point pen in the spine. Chose from Ruby Red, Bottle Green or Navy Blue. £14.95 each. Club price 10 assorted for only £50 including postage (and pro rata).

DISCOUNTED STAMPS



Clive Goff continues to advertise in these pages, helping us to pay our bills. Be assured his service is all legal and above board. ☎ 020 8422 4906 clive.goff@londonrugby.com See advert on page 3.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Genesis Choice provides quotations with the help of humans. See page 16.

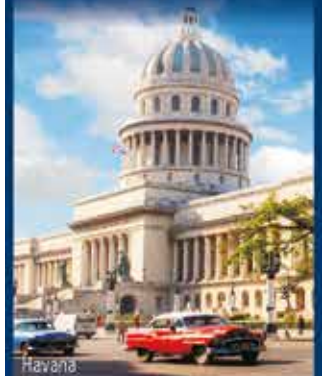
CLUB INSURANCE

Fidentia, successors to Moore Stephens, continue to offer the Mr Bridge Club Insurance package for less than £75 for clubs up to 300 members. Policies start November 1 and pro rata. ☎ 020 3150 0080

All good wishes,

Mr Bridge

CHRISTMAS IN CUBA & THE CARIBBEAN



BARBADOS TO HAVANA

Dec 15, 2017

17 DAYS from £3,895pp

HOSTED BY
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ANDREA
POWELL



Follow the trail of Carrie Gibson's epic history of the Caribbean, "Empire's Crossroads", sailing from Barbados into the heart of Cuba - Havana.

	Fly to BRIDGETOWN Barbados
DEC 15	Embark Aegean Odyssey
DEC 16	BRIDGETOWN Barbados
DEC 17	RODNEY BAY St Lucia
DEC 18	FALMOUTH HARBOUR Antigua
DEC 19	GUSTAVIA St Barts
DEC 20	CHARLESTOWN St Kitts and Nevis
DEC 21/22	AT SEA
DEC 23	PORT ANTONIO Jamaica
DEC 24	SANTIAGO DE CUBA Cuba
DEC 25	CHRISTMAS DAY CELEBRATIONS AT SEA
DEC 26	CASILDA Cuba
DEC 27	CIENFUEGOS Cuba
DEC 28	AT SEA
DEC 29	HAVANA Cuba
DEC 30	HAVANA Cuba Disembark Aegean Odyssey and transfer to Havana Airport
DEC 31	Arrive UK

☐ Overnight stay in port AEG171215BR

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SINCE 1978

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RENAISSANCE ITALY & HISTORIC ISLANDS



HOSTED BY BERNARD MAGEE

ROME TO SEVILLE 13 DAYS from £2,450pp May 30, 2018

Join *Aegean Odyssey* in Civitavecchia, the port of Rome, then sail to Florence and let the birthplace of artistic giants engulf your senses and stretch your mind at every turn. In Pisa, see the iconic Leaning Tower, and in Lecce, wander through the 25,000-seat Roman amphitheatre.

Walk in the footsteps of Napoleon on Elba. Cruise the Lavezzi Isles and the Maddalena Archipelago to Corsica, Spanish Menorca, and the historic port of Malaga for the opportunity of a trip to the 13th-century Alhambra Palace, the last Spanish capital of the Moors, and more.

Enter the mouth of the Guadalquivir River and cruise upstream through the Andalusian countryside to the heart of the beautiful and romantic city of Seville, which legend has it was founded by Hercules, for a spectacular finale that is small-ship cruising at its best.



VOYAGE HIGHLIGHTS

- See the Leaning Tower of Pisa
- Elba, Napoleon's island of exile
- Calls at the Mediterranean islands of Corsica, Menorca and Mallorca
- Sail the Guadalquivir River to the heart of Seville



Odyssey Club members receive an additional 5% discount

YOUR ITINERARY

MAY 30	Fly to ROME Italy Transfer to Civitavecchia to embark <i>Aegean Odyssey</i>	
MAY 31	FLORENCE Italy (from Livorno)	O
JUN 1	PISA/LUCCA Italy (from Livorno)	
JUN 2	ELBA Italy	
JUN 3	BONIFACIO Corsica, France	
JUN 4	AJACCIO Corsica, France ⚓	
JUN 5	MAHON Menorca, Spain	
JUN 6	PALMA Mallorca, Spain	
JUN 7	AT SEA	
JUN 8	MALAGA Spain	
JUN 9	CADIZ Spain	O
JUN 10	CADIZ Spain Cruising along the Guadalquivir River SEVILLE Spain	O
JUN 11	SEVILLE Spain Disembark <i>Aegean Odyssey</i> and transfer to Seville Airport	

AEG1805308R

Key to symbols

O Overnight stay in port ⚓ Ship at anchor

New ports of call are shown in gold



Pisa



Alhambra Palace



VOYAGES TO ANTIQUITY

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Bernard Magee's Acol Bidding Quiz

This month we are dealing with hands with two long suits. You are West in the auctions below, playing 'Standard Acol' with a weak no-trump (12-14 points) and four-card majors.

1. Dealer West. Game All.

♠ J 7 6 5 4 3
♥ Q 8 6 4 2
♦ A Q
♣ Void



West	North	East	South
?			

4. Dealer East. Love All.

♠ A 8 7 6 5
♥ 9 3
♦ K Q 8 6 2
♣ 2



West	North	East	South
		1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
?			

7. Dealer West. Love All.

♠ 3
♥ A K Q 3 2
♦ A J 5 4 2
♣ 7 5



West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2♥	3♠
?			

10. Dealer West. Love All.

♠ 7 6
♥ K Q 8 7 6
♦ A K 8 3 2
♣ 2



West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2♣	2♠
?			

2. Dealer West. Love All.

♠ A 8
♥ K Q 4 3 2
♦ A K 8 7 2
♣ 2



West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
?			

5. Dealer East. Love All.

♠ K Q J 8 7
♥ A K
♦ Q J 6 4 3
♣ 6



West	North	East	South
		1NT	Pass
2♥	Pass	2♠	Pass
?		1Transfer to spades	

8. Dealer East. E/W Game.

♠ 7 3 2
♥ A K 8 4 3
♦ 5 2
♣ K J 4



West	North	East	South
		1♣	1♠
2♥	3♠	4♥	4♠
?			

11. Dealer West. N/S Game.

♠ Void
♥ K Q 8 7 6
♦ Q J 4
♣ A Q 8 7 6



West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2♣	2♠
?			

3. Dealer East. Love All.

♠ Void
♥ K 7 6 4 2
♦ K 9 8 7 6
♣ Q 4 3



West	North	East	South
		1♠	Pass
?			

6. Dealer South. Love All.

♠ A K 8 7 6
♥ J 10 9 7 6
♦ A K
♣ 2



West	North	East	South
			3♦
?			

9. Dealer North. N/S Game.

♠ A 7 6
♥ J 10 9 8 7
♦ 4 3
♣ 6 5 2



West	North	East	South
	1♥	1♠	2♥
?			

12. Dealer East. Love All.

♠ A 9 8 7 6 5
♥ 7
♦ Void
♣ Q 9 8 7 6 5



West	North	East	South
		1♥	Dbl
1♠	2♦	2♥	3♦
?			

My Answers:

1.....
2.....
3.....

Answers on page 41

My Answers:

4.....
5.....
6.....

Answers on page 43

My Answers:

7.....
8.....
9.....

Answers on page 45

My Answers:

10.....
11.....
12.....

Answers on page 47

Mr Bridge UK Events



Elstead Hotel
Bournemouth BH1 3QP



Denham Grove
Near Uxbridge, UB9 5DG



Ramada Resort, Grantham
Marston, Lincs NG32 2HT



Chatsworth Hotel
Worthing BN11 3DU



Inn on the Prom
St Annes On Sea FY8 1LU



Blunsdon House Hotel
Swindon SN26 7AS

Tutorial Events with Bernard Magee

Blunsdon House

15-17 September £252

Play and Defence of 1NT

Chatsworth Hotel

22-24 September £252

Better Finessing

2-4 Feb 2018 £252

Supporting Majors

Ramada Resort Grantham

Wed-Fri

8-10 November £252

Ruffing for Extra Tricks

Inn on the Prom

Mon-Wed

5-7 March 2018 £252

Supporting Majors

Elstead Hotel

23-25 Feb 2018 £252

4-4-4-1 Hands

Gourmet Food and Duplicate at Two Bridges Hotel, Dartmoor

Monday to Wednesday

30 Oct-1 Nov

13-15 November

12-14 March 2018

9-11 April 2018

Four-Night Break at the Trouville Hotel, Sandown, Isle of Wight

Thursday to Monday

15-19 February 2018

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for further details

PROGRAMME

DAY 1

- 1500 **Mr Bridge**
Welcome Desk open
Tea or coffee on arrival
- 1745 **to 1830**
Welcome drinks
- 1830 **to 2000**
Dinner
- 2015 **BRIDGE 1**
DUPLICATE PAIRS

DAY 2

- 0800 **to 0930**
Breakfast
- 1000 **to 1230**
SEMINAR & PLAY
of SET HANDS or
DUPLICATE BRIDGE
(Just Duplicate Events)
- 1230 **to 1330**
Cold Buffet Lunch
- 1400 **to 1645**
BRIDGE 2
TEAMS of FOUR
(Bernard Magee Events)
DUPLICATE PAIRS
(otherwise)
- 1815 **to 2000**
Dinner
- 2015 **BRIDGE 3**
DUPLICATE PAIRS

DAY 3

- 0800 **to 0930**
Breakfast
- 1000 **to 1230**
SEMINAR & PLAY
of SET HANDS or
DUPLICATE PAIRS
(Just Duplicate Events)
- 1230 **to 1400**
Sunday Lunch
(weekend events only)
- 1400 **to 1645**
BRIDGE 4
DUPLICATE PAIRS

Full Board

No Single Supplement*

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*subject to availability

Just Duplicate Events

Denham Grove

8-10 September £212

24-26 November £212

Blunsdon House

29 Sep - 1 Oct £212

Chatsworth Hotel

6-8 October £212

3-5 November £212

Elstead Hotel

Mon-Wed

9-11 October £212

24-26 November £212

Ramada Resort Grantham

24-26 November £199

Hosted by Will Parsons

19-21 Jan 2018 £199

Please note there are no seminars,
set hands or prizes at these events.

Tutorial Events

Ramada Resort Grantham

29 Sep - 1 Oct £212

Further into the Auction

16-18 Feb 2018 £212

Leads and Defence

Blunsdon House

13-15 October £222

Doubles

10-12 November £222

Splinters and Cue Bids

Elstead Hotel

3-5 November £222

Better Leads and Switches

Hosted by Will Parsons

Denham Grove

17-19 November £222

Better Hand Evaluation

Chatsworth Hotel

24-26 November £222

Game Tries



Lives and Times

This series of articles will cover the intertwined lives of three bridge personalities. The lifespans of Paul Stern, Louisa Chamberlain and George Lengyel take us from the late 1800s to the early twenty-first century. Part 1 covers the period to just before the start of WW2, and includes the golden years of contract bridge.

Part 1: 1892-1936

Paul Stern, of Austria

The Viennese family of Edward and Bertha Stern comprised four children: Paul, Hilda, Antonia and Olga. In 1892, the year that Paul was born, Vienna was part of a diverse and multi-cultural empire, ruled by Emperor Franz Joseph I (1830-1916), which comprised the Austrian Empire, the Kingdom of Hungary and many Slavic areas. Laws were published in eight languages and all national groups continued to speak and be schooled in their own languages.

Paul's education and career must have made the family proud. He was enrolled at Vienna University (1911 – 1914), studying law and, at about the same time, he completed a business course at the Vienna Business Academy.

During WW1 Paul served his country in the cavalry, with distinction, on the Italian and Serbian fronts and was awarded three medals, including the prestigious *Goldene Verdienstkreuz mit der Krone am Bande der Tapferkeitsmedaille*. At six foot three inches tall he would have stood out amongst his comrades.

It may interest historians to know that his fellow Austrian, Adolf Hitler who spent the years 1905-1913 in Vienna and was just three years older than Paul, won the Iron Cross which could be considered as the equivalent medal. Hitler had, of course, been rejected by the Austrian army and

served in the German army.

After the end of WW1 Paul completed his studies in law at Vienna University (full credit being given for war service of 3 years 89 days); his qualification was Doctor of Law (although in later publications he is mistakenly believed to have a degree in philosophy). On the 19th October 1919, he married Martha Hoffman. It may not be too fanciful to suppose



that the alliterative nature of that date might have been brought up at the family wedding.

Family life for Martha and Paul seems to have gone well; Paul worked in Vienna and travelled in Europe on business. Children came along: Eve (1921) and Edward (1924). In the years that followed, his talented mind and his determined efforts allowed him to rise to a level of technical proficiency at bridge that allowed him to go on to be a national and international champion. His innovation and forward thinking helped his country to achieve superiority in Europe and further afield.

It is hard to summarise Paul's vast bridge playing achievements. He excelled as player, theorist, author and official. He founded the Austrian Bridge Federation in 1929 and was its first president. He was a member of the Austrian open teams that won the first two European championships in 1932 and 1933, under the auspices of the International Bridge League in Scheveningen, Netherlands and in London. ►

In 1925, American Harold Vanderbilt was the person who derived Contract bridge from Auction bridge. The game became hugely popular in the USA and all around the world. The infamous self-publicist Ely Culbertson was well travelled, and it comes as no surprise to read that Culbertson and Stern would later meet, and duel, at the bridge table, in much hyped and discussed tournaments. The systems they each developed were constantly compared and discussed. They collaborated on projects and ventures, such as AutoBridge.

Guy Ramsey, said, '...he [Paul Stern] was the acknowledged European expert on all cases involving games of chance – a considerable requirement in a Continent where gambling is legal. He was, in fact, almost a one-man Court of Appeal when questions of ethics (or cheating) were involved.'
Contract Bridge Journal, June 1948

Rixi Markus's autobiography describes the fervour surrounding bridge in coffee houses in Vienna. The serious bridge was at the Vienna Bridge Club. It is here, at the Grand Hotel, the

recruited teammates from amongst the members.

In the early 1930s, arguably the height of bridge's popularity, ideas on systems were reported on in daily newspapers.

Culbertson was busy making movie featurettes, six in total, each 20 minutes or so in duration, and these were being played in cinemas. The golden age of bridge coincided with the golden age of radio, and bridge was widely followed through that medium as radio was so accessible.

Challenge matches were all the rage and superiority in bidding was contested. So, what made Paul's Vienna system a stand-out? He

Louisa Chamberlain, of England

John Chamberlain (1881-1917), was Neville Chamberlain's cousin; the Chamberlain extended family were from Edgbaston in Birmingham. In 1907 he married Hilda Poynting (1885-1974), daughter of John Henry Poynting (1852-1914), a notable physicist who lived there, and was a leading academic at Birmingham and Cambridge universities. Hilda's father died after falling into a diabetic coma; a disease that was to play a big part in Louisa's later life. She was an outgoing woman, who excelled at croquet and enjoyed her bridge. Hilda and



club's base, that the top players played, '... in surroundings that were relaxed, friendly and comfortable – not to say luxurious.' There were about 100 members, who dined on the premises when games ended. Vice President Paul Stern crafted his system and

was the first person to truly codify bidding. The likes of Culbertson in the USA, S J Simon, Jack Marx, and the Acolites, etc, all were developing systems where, pretty much, what you bid matched with what you held in your hand.

John lived with their four children, Drusilla, Louisa (born 1909), Honor and Richard in Edgbaston.

During WW1 Captain John Chamberlain was in the South Wales Borderers. He was killed in action, at the age of 36 and was buried in Ypres,

Championship Der International Bridge League

Printed in German, in 1935, and written by: Paul Stern; Egon Watza; Manfred Wlaschütz; Karl von Blühdorn; et al. Gerald Hilte, at the Netherlands Bridge Museum, tells me:

'This is an incredible unique book, it is numbered, all the hands and results are on folded pages (unfolded: 4-5 A4 format) with handwritten hands and results.

Dr Stern presented the book in a way that Hungary (who won this championship) was not the best team, but Austria (actually 2nd) were the best team.

Today daily bulletins present the daily boards and results, but before 1934 it took a year. He was the first one who managed that the book was published within 2 weeks after the match was finished, at least it was presented like that.'

The Times, on 22 March 1938 reported, 'The Vienna System, as Dr Stern himself prefers to call it, is an amalgam of various systems. To master it, it is necessary to unlearn much, receive on trust several new ideas, and take the structure as a whole with no half measures. "Bidding," it is stated, "should not be a series of problems for one's partner but a more or less mechanical disclosure of specific cards."'



Belgium, alongside so many friends and colleagues.

How sad it must have been for Louisa and her siblings, to lose grandfather and father just a few years apart. Hilda went on to marry Samuel Gurney-Dixon (1878-1970) a year later, and they had three children. Hilda, Samuel, and all seven children lived happily together, first in Winchester and then in Lyndhurst, Hampshire.

Sometime in the 1930s Hilda invited Paul Stern to her home in Winchester, where they played bridge together. Probably around this time Louisa was learning how to play bridge, and ▶

A story, as recounted by a family member, sometime before the outbreak of WW2:

'The Chamberlains lived in, or near, the New Forest. There is a story that Louisa went abroad and took her dog, Watson, down to the New Forest by train to stay with her mother. The dog was unhappy and caught the correct train back to London all on his own and was reunited with Louisa through his dog collar.'

Bamberger Point Count System

The Bamberger Point Count System requires 52 points to produce a probable slam on power alone. The honour cards are evaluated as: 7 point for Ace, 5 point for a King, 3 point for a Queen, and 1 point for a Jack. Bamberger is one of several systems, others include Collet, Polish, Robertson, Vernes. That last one will keep you on your toes, as the points are: 4, 3.1, 1.9 and 0.9, respectively.

Basics of the Austrian System.

The system, which uses the Bamberger method for counting points, changed quite a bit over the years. Stern used a variety of evaluation methods.

- 1♣: 19-27 points. No five-card suits other than clubs.
- 1♦/1♥/1♠: 18-27 points. Five-card suit.
- 1NT: 28+ points. Any shape. Forcing.
- 2♣/2♦/2♥/2♠: Game going strength which requires some help from partner to reach slam.
- 2NT: 35-41 points. Balanced (when unbalanced you open 1NT).
- 3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠: Pre-emptive. 7+ card-suit. Weak.

Gordon Rainsford, General Manager of the English Bridge Union, was born in Kenya and spent his early childhood there. He explains, 'I first played rubber bridge at home with my family when I was a teenager, and remember supplementing my pocket money playing with my grandmother against her friends. I also used to play at the Visa Oshwal Community Centre in Mombasa, where they played "Stern" – a variant of the Vienna system using the 7-5-3-1 point count.'

would have met Paul. Louisa was unlike most of the women with a family background such as hers. She was independent, well-travelled (having visited Malta, Egypt and India), and kept distant from tennis parties and the debutant social scene.

She moved to London in the late 1930s and became a bridge host at The Hamilton (close to the site of tall hotels in Park Lane). What was involved in being a bridge host? Perhaps this advertisement describes the role:

From *The Times*, 24 March 1930, and relating to the Acol Club in West Hampstead:

'Capable and experienced lady wanted to take charge of the bridge room of one of the newest and most enterprising bridge clubs of NW London. Applicants must have great personal charm, be quite alive, and have plenty of initiative, able to play a really first-class game, and have a good following.'

The Hamilton was one of the grand clubs of London. It competed with

Crockfords and The Portland amongst others. Run by Count Repelaer, a rich and titled Dutchman with a waxed moustache, the club had hotel-like rooms for visitors, and a decent restaurant.

The mid 1930s would have been an exciting time for the bridge playing Hilda and Louisa. Would they have made the trip to Selfridges to kibitz the infamous Culbertson challenge matches?

Surely we can speculate they would have attended, sat in the dedicated packed auditorium, and watched the Vugraph. Perhaps afterwards reading the review of the day's play in the evening edition of the papers, before popping into the club for a rubber or two.

George (Gyuri) Lengyel, of Hungary

Lajos Lengyel and Piroska Pécsi, of Budapest, had just one child, George (1911-2005). He had a tough start

in life as his father Lajos, a solicitor, suffered a nervous breakdown in WW1, and, unable to endure the noise and bustle of Budapest, sought refuge in a small village. George was brought up by relatives in Budapest. According to George, during WW1 his mother, aunt and grandmother needed a fourth player for bridge, so they taught him to play when he was five years old. In his words: 'with better things to do in the evening at that time of life, I had to be bribed to make up a four'. This, he considered, was the start of his professional career at bridge.

While at university studying economics, he lived in digs in Buda, rowed on the Danube, played tennis in the summer and enjoyed skiing. He would have come across Robert Darvas (1903-1957), Geza Ottlik (1912-1990), and much later, Tim Seres (1925-2007) to name a few of his countrymen, who became major figures in the bridge world in their lifetime. The first two were praised by Alan Truscott in the *New York Times*, 13 January, 1991:

Jaarnummer: 4526/1040 Handteekening van den houder: [Signature]

Fotografisch portret van den houder.

Rechterduimafdruk van den houder.



'If one wanted to select the bridge writer with the greatest creativity in terms of card-play theory, two Hungarians would be among the strongest candidates. One is Robert Darvas, who died in 1957 and is remembered for the classic "Right Through the Pack", written with Norman De V. Hart and read and reread with great delight all over the world since it first appeared in 1947. Each card in the deck tells a story in which it plays a key role. The themes, both technical and human, are astonishingly varied.



The other is Geza Ottlik, who died October 9 1990, at the age of 78. His great work, written with Hugh Kelsey, was "Adventures in Cardplay," which opened new frontiers in play and defense when it appeared in 1979. In his own country he was known to a wider audience as the ultimate authority on Hungarian prose. His novel "A School at the Frontier" was translated into many languages. In 1985 he received the Kossuth Prize for Literature, which is his country's highest award.'

In such company, George developed as a player, and he made up a student team which was nicknamed "The 100 Years Team" because of their total ages. They went on to win the Hungarian Championships in what were still the early days of bridge. A profile on him in *Bridge Magazine*, in the 1980s, said, '...it was no good speaking just Hungarian, for no one else spoke Hungarian and at an early age he had been encouraged to become

multi-lingual. He now speaks seven languages fluently.'

Austria hosted the 1934 European Championships in Vienna but it was Hungary which triumphed. That strong team, and variations of it, went on to win first or second placings at the championships for the next three years. In effect, between them Austria and Hungary could rightly claim to have dominated the European bridge scene between 1932 and 1938. In the women's championships, Austria triumphed in back-to-back years, 1935, 1936, 1937.

At 25 years of age, George was a winner at the 1936 Bridge Olympiad, an international competition devised by Ely Culbertson. Was it his success at bridge that prevented him completing his studies? We can only speculate.

He started a professional career as a buyer for a chemical factory in the mid-1930s.

Acknowledgements

Several people have helped me with this set of articles. I'd like to thank David Stern (grandson of Paul Stern), Evi and Marianne (George Lengyel's daughters), John Townsend, The Netherlands Bridge Museum, Valentine Ramsey (Guy Ramsey's son). I have quoted from Guy Ramsey's excellent book *Aces All*, Rixi Markus's autobiography *A Vulnerable Game*, *Contract Bridge Journal*, and *The Times*.

Next month

Paul's grandson, David, only has a few of Paul's bridge medals and none of his war medals. What happened to them? The 1937 encounter with Culbertson, how did that turn out? How did the Stern family leave Austria? Was Paul a toughie, or in fact, a gentle giant?

Louisa's life changes course, and she faces struggles in addition to the war.

George marries, but is forced to reach an unwilling accommodation with a Nazi leader.

(Do I sound like a TV listings magazine?) ■

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Hesitating with a Singleton

Q Early in the hand, I noticed one of my opponents, an experienced player, discard a club. Towards the end of the play, I led out winning clubs with the ♣2 taking the last trick in the suit. However, on the last but one club, when both my opponents had one each, one of the players hesitated for a few seconds before playing it. Because I had kept count, no harm was done, but if I had missed the one that was discarded earlier, I might not have played the winning ♣2 and tried a losing option instead. Under Law 72D, I think the opponent's delay in playing the singleton was illegal, but should I have spoken to my opponent, or to the director? Richard Hainsworth, Leeds.

A You are generally expected to know what is going on and if you do not remember whether the thirteenth card in a suit is good, it is considered your fault. There is nothing illegal in pausing for thought at any time when it cannot mislead declarer.

If you do have worries about a break in tempo, you should call the director not speak to your opponent,

but in this case you would not get any sympathy.



Q I am not an experienced bridge player, learning on the job, as it were. I was playing in a friendly four at home where I picked up the following hand.

♠ A 10 x
♥ A x x x
♦ A 10 x
♣ A J x

Even though there were 17 HCP, I did not like the look of it and opened 1NT (showing 12-14) which my partner left me in. I made eight tricks as my partner filled in some of the gaps. Afterwards, I was challenged by one of the opposition that I should not have opened 1NT as I was too strong. I thought one could 'take a view' on one's hand? Was it a psyche? Is that permitted? Name and address supplied.

A If your opponents said you had done something illegal they are wrong. Whatever your agreements with

partner, you are always permitted to deviate so long as partner does not expect it.

Of course, it depends somewhat on what your opponents meant: if they were merely advising you on what they thought you should bid, then I am afraid that a lot of opponents do that. It is not polite and they should not, unless you ask for advice. If they are saying you are not allowed to make such a bid, they are wrong, not you.



Q At a recent beginners' session, I was called to the table after a revoke. The revoke had been established so I asked them to call me at the end of the play. However, shortly afterwards I was called again for another revoke by the same person. Again, I said, 'Don't worry, play on and I will adjudicate at the end of the play.'

I had no sooner sat down (I was a playing director) than I was called, yet again, to the same table. This time the offender's partner had also revoked.

I can't find anywhere in the rules to cover this. If the same person revokes

twice, the second revoke is not penalised, but should the second offender be treated as though the first offender had not revoked? That was the decision I made at the table.

Andrew Mountain, Oakleigh, Wrexham.

A When a player revokes and it is established, his side suffer a penalty. There are various situations but, in general, the revoke tends to be one trick transferred to the other side. If a player revokes again in the same suit there is no further penalty.

Those are the rules. There is no rule that you do not get a penalty if you revoke in a different suit or if your partner revokes. So, if you mean there were two revokes in the same suit, then his partner revoked, his side would suffer two penalties, usually, but not invariably, two tricks.



Q I believe that standard Acol teaches that with a 1NT type of opening hand you open 1NT with a four-card major and one of the suit with a five-card major.

If a partnership declares that they are playing standard Acol, but (regularly or by agreement) open 1NT holding a five-card major, should the opposition be advised of that fact and if so how?

Colin Jones,
Kingston-upon-Thames.

A Standard Acol is an approach, often taught to beginners, and generally followed by novices. As people develop in the game, playing with and against different people, and reading articles (often in BRIDGE) and talking to other players, their game develops and no two pairs with any experience play everything exactly the same way. So, you cannot really make too many deductions about detail when a pair claims to be playing Standard Acol.

It is generally understood that any particular rules about 1NT openings should be written on a system card and disclosed in answer to a question, but they are not alertable nor announceable nor do they stop the overall approach being described as Standard Acol. This includes the frequency of including five-card majors, which differs from pair to pair.

There is one exception to this general approach: if a pair has an agreement to include singletons in their 1NT opening, that should be part of their announcement.



Q Last night my LHO opened a Benji 2♥. When the play had been completed, I found they had seven hearts and 10 points, so I queried why they had not opened 3♥. The answer was that they played at another club and

there, since both bids were weak, it was permitted to open at the two level with seven cards. Please can you tell me if this is correct.

Norman Taylor by email.

A Certainly: players may bid as they please, except certain conventions which are illegal. If they wish to open 2♥ on a seven-card suit that is their right. A 2♥ opening showing hearts is not a convention so a pair can play it in any way they please. There is no rule that other people should play the way that you do, so long as they are not playing an illegal convention.

However, they are required to keep their opponents informed, so if they have a system card they should show how they play 2♥ on it, and also describe it accurately in answer to a question.



Q While in the death throes of an unmakeable contract with five cards left in each hand, I played the ♥10 hoping to tempt my left hand opponent to ruff with his master trump. As soon as I placed the ♥10 on the table, my right-hand opponent beat it with the ♥J while my left-hand opponent was still deliberating. I objected to this and called the director who ruled it was a lead out of turn and gave me a penalty trick to placate me. Was this the correct ruling?

Name and address supplied.

A The law states that when a defender plays to a trick before his partner, then the card played becomes a major penalty card, which in this case, means that the card must still be played

whatever his partner plays, and that declarer may require the other player to do one of three things: 1. require offender's partner to play the highest card he holds of the suit led, or 2. require offender's partner to play the lowest card he holds of the suit led, or 3. forbid offender's partner to play a card of another suit specified by declarer.

The trouble with this is that #1 and #2 are no help at all since you knew he had no hearts, so you might as well try #3. However, supposing spades are trumps and you forbid the player from playing a club, then he will just discard a diamond.

There is another law, numbered 23 in the 2007 laws, which is very rarely used at club level, but this might be a time when it should be: it says that if a player commits an irregularity when he knows it could work to his benefit, then the director adjusts if it does work to his benefit. So, under this law I would give declarer a trick.

A new law book applies from August 1st and Law 23 will become law 72C.



Q Please could you give your opinion on the following bidding situation. My RHO (N) opened 2♠, alerted as weak. I had 12 points (with four spades) and passed. My LHO (S) bid 2NT and my partner overcalled 3♦. North then bid 3♥. I asked the strength of the 2NT bid and was told 16 points, but could be 13 points.

I judged that my partner had a long suit headed by the A-K. Nine of my points were kings and under South's presumed aces,

so I just bid 4♦. We made game as did most others.

South had eight points and had psyched. South was the TD, and, as I felt somewhat aggrieved, although I know psyches are allowed, he called another TD. TD2 confirmed the psyche was allowed but then advised me I should have taken no notice of it, as my partner had overcalled vulnerable and so must have points.

I asked for the psyche to be recorded as neither TD had suggested this.

Someone said you are only allowed to psyche once a year – is this true? Do you think a TD should set a good example by not psyching? Should a second TD side with the psycher? Name and address supplied.

A Psyches are legal. They have become unfashionable which is why people are very surprised by them, and many people do not realise they are legal. The rules say that you are required to let opponents know all your agreements with partner, but the rules do not say you have to follow them. In fact, most people who do not follow their agreements do so by accident, but whether by accident (misbids) or design (psyches), they are legal. It is thus perfectly legal for a playing director to psyche and for another director to rule it legal.

There is a worry that people who psyche frequently – perhaps once or twice every session – have the effect that their partner expects it and may allow for it. Then it becomes part of their agreements. To control this, some authorities require some or all psyches to be recorded so that patterns can be seen. ▶

When you asked for the psyche to be recorded, that is reasonable and they should do so. If, for example, this player often bids 2NT without the values so that his partner expects it, then it is no longer a psyche, and since it was not explained, it becomes illegal. Of course, this is very rare now that psyches are rare and probably did not happen here.

As to your specific questions, there is no limit to the number of psyches though someone who psyches once or twice every session will need looking at. Directors have a perfect right to psyche when playing and the second director did the correct thing by saying it was legal.

I think that for the director to advise you what you should have bid is inappropriate: advice on bidding should never be given unasked, except between partners or close friends who understand that it is acceptable.



Q My partner opened 1NT. I held seven diamonds to the king and no other points, so bid 2♦ (transfer) and followed with 3♦ over my partner's 2♥ response.

I was told the EBU had changed the rules and this was no longer allowed. Is this true?

Doreen Parrington by email.

A It is, and always has been, perfectly legal to play that 2♦ then 3♦ is a signoff in diamonds. Whoever told you differently was just wrong.

There is one small snag: you must not call it a

'transfer'. If you continue to play this way, then when partner bids 2♦ you must alert and, if asked, say, 'It either shows hearts or is a weak take-out in diamonds.'



Q I use Ripstra as a defence to 1NT. Some time ago, my partner bid 2♣ over an opponent's opening 1NT which I alerted and, when asked, said it was showing clubs, hearts and spades. I responded 2♠ and my partner then bid 3♣: she in fact had a long club suit. The director was called, he ruled that my partner's bid was illegal and we were penalised – how I cannot recall.

Recently, at another club, a similar thing happened against us after my partner had opened 1NT. The 2♣ overcall was alerted and described as showing both majors and was responded to with 2♠ by our other opponent. The 2♣ overcaller then bid 3♣, having a long club suit. After the hand had been played in 3♣, I said, based on my previous experience, that the 3♣ bid was illegal, but my partner said he was happy and so I did not call the director. The 2♣/3♣ overcaller said that her bid was a psyche which, she claimed, was legal.

I would appreciate an explanation of who was right.

Bill Archer,
Ashted, Surrey.

A Assuming you are not playing in a novice event, for which there are special rules, then any defence to 1NT is permitted.

This means any defence.

So, if you wish to play 2♣ as hearts and spades with longer clubs than diamonds, or just long clubs, that is perfectly legal. If you wish to play 2♦ as hearts and spades with longer diamonds than clubs, or just long diamonds, that is also perfectly legal. What you must not do is call either of them Ripstra, because they are not, and this will mislead opponents.

In the first case, the director said the 3♣ bid was illegal, which is not true. If partner wishes to bid 3♣ that is legal. What was illegal was your description of the 2♣ bid, which is not Ripstra.

In the second case, the overcaller claimed it was a psyche, which is obviously untrue since she expected partner to understand it. If it had been a psyche then partner fielded it and that would be illegal.

This problem has been going on for many years. Club players take up a defence to 1NT which includes artificial 2♣ and 2♦ bids, then pick up a hand with long clubs or diamonds and wonder what to do. Of course, the obvious solution is to bid 3♣ or 3♦ immediately, but this never seems to occur to them even though they will get there anyway. So they bid 2♣ or 2♦ and rebid the suit and partner understands it, and they do not worry that they have misled the opposition. It is important that if any pair takes up a convention that uses 2♣ or 2♦ artificially that they agree what to do with a long minor. If they decide to bid and rebid the minor, then they must change their description of the convention that they are playing. ■

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About Safety Plays

A safety play is an insurance policy. You pay a small premium (usually the sacrifice of an overtrick) in order either to guarantee your contract or substantially to improve your chances of fulfilling your contract.

Obviously, safety plays are a luxury that you can afford when you are in an excellent contract which allows you to sacrifice an overtrick.

Note that frequently you look at dummy and it becomes obvious that your main chance is a 3-2 trump break. You might then look for ways of guarding your contract against a 4-1 or even 5-0 trump break, but you must not do so at the expense of failing if trumps break 3-2.

By all means, look for safety plays, but not at the expense of jeopardising your main chance.

Hand A	Hand B
♠ 8 3	♠ A Q 8 5
♥ 8 3 2	♥ Q 3 2
♦ A K Q 7 6 5	♦ A K 2
♣ 10 7	♣ Q J 3
♠ A 9 6 4	♠ 7 6 4 3 2
♥ A K 4	♥ A K 8 7
♦ 3 2	♦ 7 3
♣ A K 5 3	♣ A K
Contract 3NT.	Contract 6♣.
Lead ♣Q.	Lead ♦Q.

In Hand A, if diamonds break 3-2

you appear to have eleven easy tricks. However, suppose they break 4-1. You can cash ♦A-K-Q and concede a diamond, giving you two diamond winners in dummy, but you have no entry to dummy and are held to eight tricks. An alternative that will allow you to take ten tricks, if diamonds break 3-2 or 4-1, is to duck a diamond immediately. The premium is your prospect of an eleventh trick. Should you sign away an eleventh trick to safeguard your contract if diamonds break badly? At teams-of-four or rubber bridge scoring, where overtricks are relatively unimportant, you certainly should. However, playing duplicate pairs you expect most pairs to play in 3NT and you cannot afford to make one fewer trick than everybody else, so perhaps you should stake all on a 3-2 diamond break. In this article I will assume you are playing rubber bridge or teams-of-four, both methods of scoring which encourage you to concentrate on fulfilling your contract rather than seeking overtricks. If you are playing duplicate pairs, making an overtrick can be the difference between a top and a bottom so a very different way of thinking is needed. I will examine this in a later article. Note that the recommended safety play doesn't guarantee your contract. If the missing diamonds are breaking 5-0, there is nothing that you can do. However, it clearly widens your prospects to include overcoming a 4-1 diamond break without jeopardising your contract if diamonds break 3-2.



When considering a safety play, make sure you fully understand the distribu-

tions that will gain, but also ensure you realise any distributions where your safety play might lose out (if any).

Hand B is slightly harder. You have no loser outside the trump suit. If trumps are 2-2 **and** West has the ♠K, you can make 13 tricks by finessing dummy's ♠Q and then cashing the ♠A. This line of play will give you 12 tricks if trumps are 2-2 **or** West has the ♠K (but not ♠K-J-10-9). Undoubtedly this is your main chance so the correct approach is to consider whether you can give yourself extra chances without jeopardising your main chance. Try cashing the ♠A first, intending to return to your hand with a club to lead a spade towards dummy's ♠Q. This certainly gives you 12 tricks if trumps break 2-2. Equally, if West has ♠K-J-9, the spade finesse is still working for you. The dangers of sustaining a ruff by playing a round of clubs (clubs breaking 8-0) is negligible. So, there seems to be no downside in terms of endangering your contract. The gain is when East has the ♠K singleton: your safety play means it falls under the ♠A rather than capturing your ♠Q and leaving you with a second spade loser.

Note here that there is no danger of an opponent winning the ♠K and giving his partner a ruff. If trumps are breaking 2-2 there are no trumps left when you lose the ♠K. If they are breaking 3-1, it is the opponent with three trumps who wins the second round and he cannot give himself a ruff. As in Hand A, your safety play doesn't guarantee your contract. There are some layouts which will defeat you whatever you do, namely a 4-0 ▶

trump break or East holding ♠K-J-10.

Hand C	Hand D
♠ K Q J 3	♠ K Q 3
♥ 7 6	♥ 7 6 2
♦ A Q 5	♦ A Q 5
♣ K 9 4 3	♣ K 9 5 3
	
♠ A 7 6	♠ A 7 6
♥ A 4	♥ A Q
♦ K 7 4	♦ K 7 4
♣ A 10 6 5 2	♣ A 10 6 4 2
Contract 6NT.	Contract 6NT.
(i) Lead ♠9.	Lead ♠J.
(ii) Lead ♥K.	

(i) In Hand C, facing a spade lead you will make 13 tricks if clubs provide you with five tricks and 12 tricks if clubs give you four tricks. The only danger to your contract comes if clubs break 4-0, and you have a safety play that guards against that. Win the ♠A and lead a low club.

If West plays a club honour, the danger has passed. You can win dummy's ♣K and now your ♣10 and dummy's ♣9 are equals against the remaining club honour, so you cannot lose more than one club trick.

If West shows out you can rise with dummy's ♣K and lead a club from dummy towards your ♣A-10. East might play a club honour to prevent your ♣10 winning, but you take this with the ♣A and drive out the other club honour.



If West plays a low club, call for dummy's ♣9. If West has four clubs this will win. More likely, the ♣9 will lose to a club honour, but then clubs are breaking no worse than 3-1. You have sacrificed an overtrick if clubs are breaking 2-2 but your no-trump slam is safe.

(ii) Of course, if the ♥K is led it would be madness even to consider a safety play in clubs. The moment you give up a club trick, you will be overwhelmed by hearts so you cannot afford the luxury of a safety play.

Hand D is an interesting variation on this theme. Can you afford the club safety play?

The answer is that you don't know whether you can afford a club loser until you know whether or not the heart finesse is working. Therefore, you should win the ♠K and immediately finesse the ♥Q. If it wins, then play the clubs safely for four tricks. If it loses, then you need five club tricks and the safety play is a luxury you cannot afford.

Note there is another issue involved here. If the heart finesse loses and the defenders play a heart back at you, then if you lose a club trick you will go several off, not to be disregarded if you are vulnerable. It would be pretty costly and demoralising to return to teammates with -300 to find that they are +100 when opponents also failed in 6NT, but simply cashed the ♣A-K and conceded a club. Deciding whether or not you can afford a safety play is not always clearcut. How likely are defenders to play a heart back to you if the heart finesse loses? This cannot easily be quantified. Even if it could, you cannot afford the time at the table to perform advanced mathematical calculations, so I would not criticise you if you recognised the safety play in clubs, but rejected it for this reason.

Hand E	Hand F
♠ Q 9 7 6 2	♠ A Q
♥ A 2	♥ A K Q 3
♦ A K 7	♦ 10 9 6 3 2
♣ J 10 7	♣ 8 6
	
♠ A 10 5 4 3	♠ K 8 6
♥ K 5	♥ 6
♦ Q 8 2	♦ A 7 4
♣ A K Q	♣ A K Q 5 4 3
Contract 6♠.	Contract 6NT.
Lead ♥Q.	Lead ♥J.

Hand E offers you another opportunity for a safety play. Win the ♥K and consider the trump suit. You can afford one trump loser but not two. If you cash the ♠A, you will make 13 tricks if either defender has the ♠K singleton and 12 tricks will be no problem if trumps break 2-1 or West started with ♠K-J-8. However, if

East started with ♠K-J-8 you will fail in your slam. There are two possible safety plays here that guarantee your slam after winning the first heart trick.

(i) Win the ♥A and lead a low spade from dummy. If East plays the ♠J or ♠K rise with your ♠A and continue spades. If East follows with the ♠8 try your ♠10. If it loses then spades have broken 2-1 so your ♠A will safely draw the remaining trump. If East discards then rise with your ♠A and lead a second spade towards dummy's ♠Q.

(ii) Win the ♥K and lead a low spade towards dummy's ♠Q. If West shows out then dummy's ♠Q will lose to East's ♠K, but you now have a marked finesse against East's remaining ♠J-8.

Theoretically, line (i) is slightly better because you still have a chance of making 13 tricks without jeopardising 12 if East has the ♠K singleton. However line (ii) has an interesting psychological point. Suppose West has ♠K-8 or ♠K-J. What should he do if you lead a low spade towards dummy's ♠Q? He would look pretty stupid if he tries to take his ♠K only to crash his partner's singleton ♠A. Perhaps the merits of this line depend on the bidding. If some version of Blackwood has been used and it is clear that declarer has all the missing aces, perhaps this line has less merit.

With Hand F, it is difficult to grasp that you could have a problem. If clubs are breaking 3-2 you have 13 tricks. You are slightly irritated at missing a grand slam and cannot see a problem with conceding a club trick if clubs break 4-1. So you win the ♥A, play a club to the ♣Q, cash the ♣A-K and because the club break is 4-1 you concede a club. A defender now switches to a diamond and suddenly you can see the danger. You must take your ♦A and can now run the clubs but you have no entry back to your hand to make the ♠K. It wouldn't have helped to unblock dummy's ♠A-Q before conceding a club, because now you would have no access to dummy's winning hearts. If you had cashed the ♠A-Q and the ♥A-K-Q you would have set up heart winners for the defenders. Once you have spotted the problem there is a neat solution. Win the ♥A and immediately duck a club. This keeps your communications intact.

If you cannot see it, you might find it helpful to construct the hand from a pack of cards and play it through.

Hand G	Hand H
♠ 9 8 ♥ K Q 6 ♦ Q J 2 ♣ A K 9 6 5	♠ 9 8 ♥ Q J 6 ♦ Q J 2 ♣ A K 9 6 5
♠ A K ♥ A J 9 3 ♦ A K 6 ♣ Q 10 4 2	♠ A K ♥ A K 9 3 ♦ A K 6 ♣ Q 4 3 2
Contract 7♣. Lead ♠Q.	Contract 7♣. Lead ♠Q.

Hand G appears simple, but you will fail if you lose a trump trick. If trumps are 2-2 or 3-1 then everything is easy, so turn your attention to what happens if trumps break 4-0. You can cope with ♣J-8-7-3 with either defender, provided you start by cashing dummy's ♣A or ♣K. This will leave you with a top club honour in each hand.

If clubs break 4-0 you will now know it and be well placed to take the appropriate finesse. However, if you carelessly start with the ♣Q you can no longer catch ♣J-8-7-3 with East.

In Hand H, you cannot cope if East has ♣J-10-8-7, but you can avoid a trump loser if West started with this holding, provided you start with the ♣Q. If East shows out continue with a second club towards dummy. West must play a high club (called splitting his honours) to prevent dummy's ♣9 winning the trick but you can take dummy's ♣A, return to your hand with your remaining spade honour and take a marked finesse against West's club holding.

Hands G and H look so similar but require totally different handling.

The correct plays in hands G and H are often referred to as safety plays, but they don't concede a trick that you would normally win and are really no more than suit combinations, playing the critical suit in the technically correct way. ■

About Safety Plays Quiz

by Andrew Kambites

(Answers on page 23)

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3
♠ 8 7 5 4 ♥ 8 6 5 ♦ Void ♣ A K Q J 8 7	♠ 10 4 2 ♥ 6 4 3 ♦ K J 6 2 ♣ 8 4 3	♠ K 8 4 ♥ A K 6 ♦ K J 3 ♣ A K J 10
♠ A K Q 2 ♥ A K ♦ 9 6 5 2 ♣ 9 6 2	♠ A K Q J ♥ 8 7 ♦ A Q 7 5 4 ♣ A K	♠ A Q 3 ♥ Q J 2 ♦ Q 10 2 ♣ 8 6 5 4
Contract 6♣. Lead: ♦A.	Contract 4♣. Lead: ♥A-K-Q.	Contract 6NT. Lead: ♠J.

Hand 4	Hand 5	Hand 6
♠ A K 7 ♥ 7 4 2 ♦ J 6 3 ♣ K 9 5 2	♠ A 4 3 2 ♥ 9 8 2 ♦ K 7 2 ♣ A K 2	♠ 6 5 ♥ A 7 5 ♦ K 5 3 2 ♣ 8 5 4 3
♠ 8 6 2 ♥ A 6 5 ♦ A K Q ♣ A J 4 3	♠ 8 ♥ A K Q J 10 7 ♦ A Q 3 ♣ 8 7 6	♠ A K J 10 9 8 ♥ K Q 2 ♦ A 8 ♣ A K
Contract 3NT. Lead: ♠Q.	Contract 6♥. West opened 4♣. Lead: ♠K.	Contract 7♠. Lead: ♠Q.

Hand 7	Hand 8
♠ 6 2 ♥ 7 2 ♦ 6 5 ♣ A K J 6 5 4 3	♠ K 7 3 2 ♥ 8 7 2 ♦ A K 8 7 ♣ 10 7
♠ A K 8 ♥ A J 5 4 ♦ A 9 8 2 ♣ 7 2	♠ A Q 4 ♥ A K ♦ 5 2 ♣ A K Q 8 4 2
Contract 3NT. Lead: ♠Q.	Contract 6NT. Lead: ♦Q.



Making Extra Tricks in No-Trumps

This DVD focuses on declarer play in no-trump contracts and starts by talking about making a basic plan, including the methods for establishing your extra tricks. The most common tactic in no-trump contracts is making extra tricks from your long suits. Making sure you have the entries in place to develop and take tricks in a long suit, which can involve ducking in that suit. Then it goes on to the idea of combining techniques as displayed in this hand:

You are South, declarer in 3NT on the ♠Q lead.

Dealer South. Love All.

♠ 4 3 2
♥ 9 8
♦ 8 6
♣ A Q 7 6 5 4



♠ A K 6 5
♥ A K 7 4
♦ A K 4
♣ 3 2

round of the suit. You win the ♠A, and duck a club – playing small from both hands, allowing East to win the trick. You win the spade return with ♠K and then play a club to the queen. When your finesse works, your ace brings down the king on the next round and you have three extra club tricks: 11 tricks in all.

♠ 4 3 2
♥ 9 8
♦ 8 6
♣ A Q 7 6 5 4

♠ Q J 10 9
♥ Q 6 2
♦ J 7 5
♣ K 9 8

♠ 8 7
♥ J 10 5 3
♦ Q 10 9 3 2
♣ J 10

♠ A K 6 5
♥ A K 7 4
♦ A K 4
♣ 3 2

You needed some luck, but by ducking early in clubs, you made the most of it.

The DVD moves on to a few more technical aspects of play including unblocking, overtaking and also getting used to making choices of plays – comparing finessing with high card establishment and long suits.

Here you can see a hand that uses some of the techniques discussed:

You are South, declarer in 3NT on the ♠Q lead (hand in the next column).

You have eight top tricks and the obvious place to look for extra tricks is clubs. You could take your ♠K, cross to dummy's ♥A and cash the ♣A, but if the queen fails to materialise, dummy's clubs will be stranded and you are left with the eight tricks you started with. The interior strength in the club suit offers a much better play: overtake your ♣K with the ace and use the ♣J-10-9 to force out the ♣Q.

♠ 4 3 2
♥ A 4
♦ 8 6
♣ A J 10 9 4 3

♠ A K 6 5
♥ K 8 7 2
♦ A K 4 3
♣ K

This way you still have the ♥A as an entry to your established clubs – you give up one top trick by swallowing the ♣K, but you gain four tricks by retaining your entry.

♠ 4 3 2
♥ A 4
♦ 8 6
♣ A J 10 9 4 3

♠ Q J 10 9
♥ Q 9 6
♦ J 7 5 2
♣ 6 2

♠ 8 7
♥ J 10 5 3
♦ Q 10 9
♣ Q 8 7 5

♠ A K 6 5
♥ K 8 7 2
♦ A K 4 3
♣ K

You finish with three ace-kings and five club tricks making 11 tricks.

The DVD covers a lot of different aspects of declarer play. It focuses on the need to try to make a plan early. Take your time when dummy comes down and try to pinpoint where your extra tricks might come from: long suits, high cards, finessing etc. Above all, remember that when you are playing duplicate pairs, you are aiming for as many tricks as possible, so those overtricks matter!

DEFENCE QUIZ

by Julian Pottage

(Answers on page 25)

You are West in the defensive positions below playing matchpoint pairs with neither side vulnerable. Both sides are using Acol with a 12-14 1NT and 2♣ Stayman.

1.

♠	K 7
♥	K 10 8 7 6 2
♦	Q 7
♣	8 7 5

♠	5 4
♥	A 5
♦	10 9 6 4
♣	A K Q 9 2

West	North	East	South
			1NT
Pass	2♦ ¹	Pass	2♥
2NT	3♥	All Pass	

¹Transfer to hearts

You cash three top clubs. After partner throws the ♠2 on the third club, you switch to the ♦10: ♦Q, ♦K and ♦A. Declarer takes the ♠K-A and leads the ♠Q. What do you do?

3.

♠	K 5 4 3
♥	6 5
♦	Q 8 7
♣	A Q 7 5

♠	Q 10 8
♥	9 2
♦	J 10 9 5
♣	9 8 6 2

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	3♣	Pass	4NT ¹
Pass	5♥ ²	Pass	6♣

¹RKCB

²Two key cards

You lead the ♦J: ♦Q, ♦K and ♦A. Declarer cashes the ♠K-A (partner follows once and discards the ♦3) and then the ♥A-K. What is your plan after the ♥J comes at trick six?

2.

♠	Q 5
♥	A K Q 5
♦	K Q 9
♣	Q 7 6 5

♠	J 10 8 7 6 4 2
♥	9 2
♦	A 5
♣	A 8

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
3♠	Dbl	4♠	5♦
All Pass			

You lead the ♠J: ♠Q, ♠K and ♠A. Declarer leads the ♦2. What do you do?

4.

♠	K 10
♥	K 10 9 6
♦	K Q 7
♣	Q 8 7 5

♠	5 4
♥	J 5 2
♦	9 6 5
♣	J 10 9 6 2

West	North	East	South
			2NT ¹
Pass	3♣ ²	Pass	3♥
Pass	6♥	All Pass	

¹20-22

²Stayman

You lead the ♠J: ♠Q, ♠K and ♠A. Declarer leads the ♠7 to the ♠K (♠2 from East), then overtakes the ♠10 with the ♠A and leads the ♠Q. What is your plan?

DECLARER PLAY QUIZ



by David Huggett

(Answers on page 27)

You are South as declarer playing teams or rubber bridge. In each case, what is your play strategy?

1.

♠	K J 3
♥	K Q 4 2
♦	K 9 5 3
♣	A Q



♠	A Q 6 4
♥	A 3
♦	A J 6 2
♣	J 7 6

You are declarer in 6NT and West leads the ♠10. How do you plan the play?

3.

♠	K 9 6 5
♥	J 5 4
♦	K Q 3
♣	Q 7 6



♠	A J 10 7 4
♥	Q 10 8
♦	A J 9
♣	K 2

You are declarer in 4♣ after three initial passes. West leads the A,K and another heart with East following. How do you plan the play?

2.

♠	K Q 6
♥	7 5
♦	A K 6 4 3
♣	8 6 4



♠	A J 2
♥	K Q 4
♦	7 5 2
♣	A 7 5 2

You are declarer in 3NT and West leads the ♥3. East plays the ♥J. How do you plan the play?

4.

♠	A K 5
♥	8 6 4
♦	K J 8 7
♣	Q 10 2



♠	6 2
♥	A K 7
♦	A Q 10 9 3
♣	K 9 3

You are declarer in 5♦ and West leads the ♠Q. How do you plan the play?

The Diaries of Wendy Wensum



Episode 65: Lucky Thirteen

Millie and I were in the bar when Gary, a well-known gardening enthusiast, joined us. 'How are you?' I enquired. 'Not too bad, but a bit tired,' he admitted, 'I've been digging on my allotment all day.' 'That must be hard work,' I sympathised. 'No, no, it was OK. I've got a good spade. Had it for fifty odd years,' Gary confided, 'and in all that time it's only had one new blade and two new handles.' 'Who's your script-writer?' asked Millie smiling more at Gary's nerve in using such an old joke rather than the gag itself. Then reverting to the character of a latter day Lady Bracknell she continued, 'Mind you, I've never owned a spade. I have to admit I wouldn't know what to do with one.' With a glass of brandy in her hand she wandered back to the bridge room. I followed with my glass of wine leaving Gary grinning at his own humour.

It was a duplicate pairs evening at the Riverside and late in the session Gary arrived at our table. 'Lost your partner?' questioned Millie impatiently. 'No. no,' Gary assured us, 'Reggie is on his way.' 'Ah, Reg the Rug,' noted Millie unnecessarily referencing Reginald's toupee which was clearly a different colour to his remaining natural hair. Reg, plus a pint of beer, arrived apologising for the delay and we played this deal (see next column).

Reggie passed and Millie opened one heart. A pass from Gary was followed by a pause by me as I considered my options. Two clubs seemed a bit of an understatement of the playing strength so I settled on three clubs showing a strong hand with a self-supporting suit. The opposition were out of the auction. Millie with only one club ignored her secondary diamond suit and bid three hearts. With nine

certain tricks in my hand I thought a slam was distinctly possible. With some trepidation I ventured four no-trumps, Roman Key Card Blackwood. Millie's reply of five clubs showed none or three of five aces. It was easy to decode. I held two aces so Millie must hold the other two aces and the king of hearts. My singleton king of spades now gave me ten tricks in my hand and with three tricks in Millie's dummy, I bid the grand slam in no-trumps.

Dealer West. N/S Vul.

<p>♠ A J</p> <p>♥ K J 10 8 7 2</p> <p>♦ A 10 9 7</p> <p>♣ 6</p>		<p>♠ 10 8 7 6 2</p> <p>♥ Q</p> <p>♦ K Q J 2</p> <p>♣ 7 3 2</p>
<p>♠ Q 9 5 4 3</p> <p>♥ 6 5 4 3</p> <p>♦ 5 4 3</p> <p>♠ 10</p>		<p>♠ K</p> <p>♥ A 9</p> <p>♦ 8 6</p> <p>♣ A K Q J 9 8 5 4</p>

West	North	East	South
Reg	Millie	Gary	Wendy
Pass	1♥	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♥	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♣	Pass	7NT
All Pass			

Reg placed his opening lead on the table facedown and swivelled his head sharply to the left to ask Millie to explain the auction. Unfortunately his toupee was rather loose and stayed in an East-West orientation. As he turned back to expose his lead, his rug now disengaged itself from its preferred position on his head to land neatly in his glass of beer. Without any obvious embarrassment he replaced the miscreant hairpiece on his head

admitting, 'I really must buy a snug rug next time.' He eventually led the four of spades and I claimed the contract immediately to the complete satisfaction of our opponents.

At the end of the round I explained to Millie how easy it was to bid the grand once she had re-bid her heart suit, but wondered why she hadn't shown her second suit by bidding three diamonds instead. My reasoning was that she might be describing her hand better by showing four plus diamonds and five or more hearts. 'I never thought about it,' was her unexpectedly honest reply.









In our usual hostelry later, Kate and Jo explained they were rather lucky to get a good result on the hand as the auction took a fairly direct route to five clubs.

West	North	East	South
Jo		Kate	
Pass	1♥	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	5♣
All Pass			

They had played the board late in the event and most partnerships had reached slams: some grand; some small, some in no-trumps, others in clubs. I still had doubts whether Millie and I would have reached seven no-trumps had Millie bid diamonds rather than re-bidding hearts, as the response to RKCB would then have been an ambiguous five hearts showing either two aces or one ace and the diamond king, in each case without the queen of diamonds. 'Well perhaps after your jump to three clubs, four no-trumps should be standard Blackwood,' suggested Kate. Jo wondered if cue bidding might have been better than any type of Blackwood.

'It's too late to worry about all this now,' complained Millie, 'Whose round is it?' ■

Answers to About Safety Plays Quiz on page 19

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4	Hand 5	Hand 6	Hand 7	Hand 8
♠ 8 7 5 4 ♥ 8 6 5 ♦ Void ♣ AKQJ 8 7	♠ 10 4 2 ♥ 6 4 3 ♦ KJ 6 2 ♣ 8 4 3	♠ K 8 4 ♥ AK 6 ♦ KJ 3 ♣ AKJ 10	♠ AK 7 ♥ 7 4 2 ♦ J 6 3 ♣ K 9 5 2	♠ A 4 3 2 ♥ 9 8 2 ♦ K 7 2 ♣ AK 2	♠ 6 5 ♥ A 7 5 ♦ K 5 3 2 ♣ 8 5 4 3	♠ 6 2 ♥ 7 2 ♦ 6 5 ♣ AKJ 6 5 4 3	♠ K 7 3 2 ♥ 8 7 2 ♦ AK 8 7 ♣ 10 7
							
♠ AKQ 2 ♥ AK ♦ 9 6 5 2 ♣ 9 6 2	♠ AKQJ ♥ 8 7 ♦ AQ 7 5 4 ♣ AK	♠ AQ 3 ♥ QJ 2 ♦ Q 10 2 ♣ 8 6 5 4	♠ 8 6 2 ♥ A 6 5 ♦ AKQ ♣ AJ 4 3	♠ 8 ♥ AKQJ 10 7 ♦ AQ 3 ♣ 8 7 6	♠ AKJ 10 9 8 ♥ KQ 2 ♦ A 8 ♣ AK	♠ AK 8 ♥ AJ 5 4 ♦ A 9 8 2 ♣ 7 2	♠ AQ 4 ♥ AK ♦ 5 2 ♣ AKQ 8 4 2
Contract 6♠. Lead ♦A.	Contract 4♠. Lead ♥A-K-Q.	Contract 6NT. Lead ♠J.	Contract 3NT. Lead ♠Q.	Contract 6♥. W opened 4♠. Lead ♠K.	Contract 7♠. Lead ♣Q.	Contract 3NT. Lead ♠Q.	Contract 6NT. Lead ♦K.

- 1 You trump the ♦A lead. What now? If trumps break 3-2, then you can easily make all 13 tricks by drawing trumps in three rounds and cashing dummy's clubs. Suppose you go for this line and trumps are 4-1? You discover the disappointing spade break on the second round and now you are in trouble. You have no way of preventing the defenders from taking their trump trick on the third round of clubs and continuing diamonds. You will be unable to draw the last trump and get back to dummy to enjoy your remaining club winners.

The correct safety play is to duck the second round of trumps. Again, you might find it helpful to construct the hand from a pack and play it through. Start by following the line when you start with ♠A-K and see what happens.

- 2 You have ended up playing at the four level in a 4-3 trump fit. Your main priority here is not losing trump control. Best play is to discard your ♦4 on the third round of hearts even though it is a winner. If West continues with a fourth round of hearts, you can then ruff with dummy's ♠10, keeping your strong four-card trump holding intact for the purpose of drawing trumps. Now only a 5-1 or worse trump break will defeat you. This is a safety play to guard against a 4-2 trump break, but as a 4-2 break is more likely than a 3-3 break this line of play is a no brainer at any form of scoring.
- 3 This deal represents the most basic of safety plays. You probably need the club finesse to succeed. However, before finessing dummy's ♠J, it costs nothing to cash the ♠A, in case East has the ♠Q singleton. This doesn't compromise your main chance, West holding the ♠Q.
- 4 You have eight top tricks, the ♠A-K, ♥A, ♦A-K-Q and ♣A-K. You need a ninth from the club suit. One possible line is to cash dummy's ♠K and lead a club from dummy intending to finesse the ♠J. This will work unless West has ♠Q-10-x-x or ♠Q-10-x-x-x.

There is a play which guarantees a third club trick whatever the distribution, but unless you have seen it before it is hard to find. Cash your ♣A and lead the ♠3 towards dummy.

If West does not follow suit on the second club you know East has the ♠Q, so rise with dummy's ♠K and lead back towards your ♠J. If West follows suit with a low club, then insert dummy's ♠9. If that loses to East's ♠10 the clubs have broken 3-2. If West plays the ♠10, then win dummy's ♠K and now the ♠J and ♠9 are equal ranking cards against the ♠Q.

- 5 This looks easy but beware! Your 12 tricks could rapidly become 11 if you try the ♠A at trick 1 and it is ruffed. You have a foolproof safety play once you think of it. Allow the ♠K to win trick 1. If West continues spades ruff, draw trumps and later use dummy's ♠A to discard your club loser.

This safety play guarded against spades breaking 8-0 (not unlikely after West's 4♠ opening bid) and the premium was nothing. You just exchanged a club loser for a spade loser.

- 6 At first, this looks similar to Hand 3. You have eight cards in the critical suit (in this case spades). You intend to finesse the ♠J so is it best to cash the ♠A first in case West has the ♠Q singleton?

Cashing the ♠A first certainly is a spectacular success if West has the ♠Q singleton, but if you try this you can only finesse once. That will not be enough if East has ♠Q-x-x-x.

Look at it this way. Cashing the ♠A before finessing the ♠J is necessary if West holds the ♠Q singleton, but it fails if West has any other spade singleton.

With five spades missing there are five possible singletons that West could hold. It is clearly best that you make the play that brings success if West has the singleton ♠7, ♠4, ♠3 or ♠2 and give up on the ♠Q singleton.

It is best to win the ♠A, cross to dummy with the ♥A and finesse the ♠J. If this passes off well, re-enter dummy with the ♦K and finesse your ♠10.

7 The correct play of the club suit in isolation is to play for the drop (cashing the ♠A-K). Clearly this leaves you with no prospect of any more club winners if one defender has ♣Q-x-x because you have no outside entry to dummy.

You can greatly improve on this by finessing the ♣J having taken trick 1 with the ♠A (Plan A). You still have good prospects of seven club tricks (West holding ♣Q-x-x, ♣Q-x or ♣Q) and this play safeguards your contract if West has ♣Q-x-x. You have found a safety play with a very small insurance premium that safeguards your contract on a 3-1 club break, but can do even better. The best play is to duck a club completely at trick 2 (Plan B). This ensures your contract against any split except East holding ♣Q-10-9-2 and, if East has these clubs, you have no chance. If West has ♣Q-10-9-2, his ♣9 will win the first round but East will show out, leaving you with a marked finesse of the ♣J on the second round.

Plan B is clearly best at rubber bridge or teams, but Plan A (a sort of compromise safety play) would be more appropriate at duplicate pairs.

8 If you were playing this hand in 7NT, you would have no choice but to hope clubs were breaking 3-2 (or perhaps a singleton ♣J). Playing in 6NT, you need only five club tricks. If they are breaking 4-1, you can afford to give up the fourth round of clubs so you should now consider whether you can cope with a 5-0 break. Remember, your main chance is clubs breaking 3-2 or 4-1 and you mustn't do anything that could jeopardise your contract if they break favourably. You can cope with either defender having ♣J-9-6-5-3 by utilising dummy's ♠10 and your ♣8. Win trick 1 with dummy's ♦A, enter your hand with the ♠A and lead the ♠2 towards dummy's ♠10. If West has ♣J-9-6-5-3 he must rise with the ♣J to prevent dummy's ♠10 making a trick, but now dummy's ♠10 is a winner and you have five easy club tricks.

If East has ♣J-9-6-5-3 West will show out on the first round. Dummy's ♠10 will lose to the ♣J, but subsequently you have a marked finesse against East's remaining ♣9-6-5-3. ■

Sally Brock Looks at Your Slam Bidding



Sally's Slam Clinic

Where did we go wrong?

John Clift sent in this slam deal that occurred during the Kenley Bridge Club anniversary event.

♠ Void	♠ A K J 5 3
♥ A K 4	♥ 10 8 7 3
♦ A Q J 9 7 4 3	♦ K 10
♣ A Q 8	♣ J 10

John (West) reports that his partner opened 1♠ and he responded 2♦. When his partner rebid 2♥ he could not bid 4NT as that would be RKCB for hearts. Instead, he jumped straight to 6♦, and was disappointed to find he had scored a joint bottom, the rest of the field making twelve or thirteen tricks in no-trumps.

There is no need to leap around with such a wildly speculative bid as 6♦. Maybe he should have bid 3♦ on the first round, but that is a matter of style (indeed, many pairs don't play that bid as natural these days), but having bid 2♦, over 2♥ he should content himself with a simple 3♣, fourth-suit forcing. East now bids 3♦ and that is very good news indeed as it's now likely that East holds the ♦K. Simplest now is for West to raise to 4♦, asking East to cue-bid. East bids 4♠ and West bids 5♣. East signs off in 5♦, now showing a minimum hand. That is probably enough reason for West to rule out a grand slam and bid a simple 6NT. If East does not have the ♠A-K, then surely he must have the ♥Q and/or

♣K, so how can there not be 12 tricks in no-trumps? I would be sympathetic to a West who bid the grand slam, which can hardly be worse than on a finesse.



Slam of the month

Once again, I am short of a good slam sent in by a reader. So I have resorted to one I thought my partner and I (West) bid well, and simply, in an overseas tournament last year.

♠ Q 5	♠ A K 10 3
♥ A 10 7 4	♥ 5
♦ A J 8 7 6 4	♦ K 10 9 5 2
♣ J	♣ Q 10 6

West	North	East	South
			1♥
2♦	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	Pass	4♠	Pass
5♣	Pass	6♦	All Pass

Partner's 3♥ bid after the overcall was a splinter bid, showing a singleton heart and a good diamond fit. That suited my hand very well so I cooperated with a return cue-bid of 4♥, showing the ace. Partner continued with a spade cue-bid so now I bid my singleton club, and that was enough reason for partner to bid the virtually 100% slam.

So, dear readers, please send in some well-bid slams or you will have to put up with me continuing to blow my own trumpet! ■

Send your slam hands to sally@mrbridge.co.uk



Answers to Julian Pottage's Defence Quiz on page 21

1.

♠ K 7		
♥ K 10 8 7 6 2		
♦ Q 7		
♣ 8 7 5		
♠ 5 4		♠ J 9 8 3 2
♥ A 5		♥ 9 4 3
♦ 10 9 6 4		♦ K J 3
♣ A K Q 9 2		♣ 10 3
	♠ A Q 10 6	
	♥ Q J	
	♦ A 8 5 2	
	♣ J 6 4	

West	North	East	South
Pass	2♦ ¹	Pass	2♥
2NT	3♥	All Pass	

¹Transfer to hearts

You cash three top clubs. After partner throws the ♠2 on the third club, you switch to the ♦10: ♦Q, ♦K and ♦A. Declarer takes the ♠K-A and leads the ♠Q. What do you do?

The general rule is to ruff an opposing winner and to do so with a low trump. Here it looks as if partner has the ♦J and declarer is trying to discard dummy's remaining diamond. As dummy can overruff, your ♥5 will not score – but playing it on the ♠Q allows partner to make the ♦J later. Ruffing with the ♥A or discarding would see the ♦7 disappear.

2.

♠ Q 5		
♥ A K Q 5		
♦ K Q 9		
♣ Q 7 6 5		
♠ J 10 8 7 6 4 2		♠ K 9 3
♥ 9 2		♥ 8 7 6 3
♦ A 5		♦ J
♣ A 8		♣ K 10 9 3 2
	♠ A	
	♥ J 10 4	
	♦ 10 8 7 6 4 3 2	
	♣ J 4	

West	North	East	South
3♣	Dbl	4♠	5♦
All Pass			

You lead the ♠J: ♠Q, ♠K and ♠A. Declarer leads the ♦2. What do you do?

You have mixed clues about the spade suit. Your partner might not raise with only two, yet declarer might not have called for the ♠Q if holding the singleton ♠A. If a second spade is not cashing, you surely need to find partner with the ♠K and cash two clubs.

You can cater for both the likely chances of beating the contract by grabbing the ♦A and switching to the ♠A, looking out for a signal on the latter. As the cards lie, partner plays the ♠10 leaving you in no doubt about whether to continue clubs.

3.

♠ K 5 4 3		
♥ 6 5		
♦ Q 8 7		
♣ A Q 7 5		
♠ Q 10 8		♠ 6
♥ 9 2		♥ 10 8 7 3
♦ J 10 9 5		♦ K 6 4 3
♣ 9 8 6 2		♣ K J 10 3
	♠ A J 9 7 2	
	♥ A K Q J 4	
	♦ A 2	
	♣ 4	

West	North	East	South
Pass	3♣	Pass	1♠
Pass	5♥ ²	Pass	4NT ¹
All Pass			6♠

¹RKCB

²Two key cards

You lead the ♦J: ♦Q, ♦K and ♦A. Declarer cashes the ♠K-A (partner follows once and discards the ♦3) and then the ♥A-K. What is your plan after the ♥J comes at trick six?

Are you wondering whether the ♥J lead is an attempt at a ruffing finesse?

While you are unsure who has the ♥Q, you can deduce that ruffing is safe. If the shape on your right is 5-5-2-1, you will cash the ♦10 on the next trick. If declarer is 5-5-1-2 and is planning to discard clubs on the hearts, the contract is cold if partner lacks the ♥Q – and otherwise two discards on the hearts will not be enough to stop partner's ♠K from scoring.

The danger in not ruffing is that one diamond goes on the third heart and another on the fourth. You avoid this by ruffing the ♥J.

4.

♠ K 10		
♥ K 10 9 6		
♦ K Q 7		
♣ Q 8 7 5		
♠ 5 4		♠ 9 8 6 3 2
♥ J 5 2		♥ Q 3
♦ 9 6 5		♦ 10 8 4 3
♣ J 10 9 6 2		♣ K 3
	♠ A Q J 7	
	♥ A 8 7 4	
	♦ A J 2	
	♣ A 4	

West	North	East	South
Pass	3♣ ²	Pass	2NT ¹
Pass	6♥	All Pass	3♥

¹20-22

²Stayman

You lead the ♣J: ♣Q, ♣K and ♣A. Declarer leads the ♠7 to the ♠K (♠2 from East), then overtakes the ♠10 with the ♠A and leads the ♠Q. What is your plan?

As on the first deal, you have the option to ruff a winner with a low trump. Does this mean that partner holds the ♥A and declarer cannot easily draw trumps? A count of points suggests not – partner has at most 5 in total, 3 of which you have seen. The reason why you are getting the chance to ruff is that declarer is missing ♥Q-J-x-x-x and wants you to ruff. Whether you ruff high or low, doing so would blow the defensive trump trick. Just discard. ■

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Answers to David Huggett's Play Quiz on page 21

1.

♠ K J 3		
♥ K Q 4 2		
♦ K 9 5 3		
♣ A Q		
♠ 10 9 8		♠ 7 5 2
♥ 8 5		♥ J 10 9 7 6
♦ Q 10 7 4		♦ 8
♣ K 9 8 2		♣ 10 5 4 3
	♠ A Q 6 4	
	♥ A 3	
	♦ A J 6 2	
	♣ J 7 6	

You are declarer in 6NT and West leads the ♠10. How do you plan the play?

You have loads of points for the slam, but you still have only ten tricks on top. You can obviously make another club and you should be able to make another diamond too, but you have to be careful about how you intend to set up these extra tricks. Strangely, you have to take the club finesse as early as possible, for the simple reason that if it fails you need to find the diamond queen onside or singleton with West.

If it wins however, you can safely play the diamonds for three tricks by playing the ace first and then low towards dummy, covering whatever West plays. If he shows out on the second round, you simply play the king and lead low towards the jack.

2.

♠ K Q 6		
♥ 7 5		
♦ A K 6 4 3		
♣ 8 6 4		
♠ 9 8 3		♠ 10 7 5 4
♥ A 10 8 3 2		♥ J 9 6
♦ Q 8		♦ J 10 9
♣ Q 9 3		♣ K J 10
	♠ A J 2	
	♥ K Q 4	
	♦ 7 5 2	
	♣ A 7 5 2	

You are declarer in 3NT and West leads the ♥3. East plays the ♥J. How do you plan the play?

Hearts may be 4-4 but you do know that East has at least three because of the lead, making it pointless to duck the opening lead. Now, if West started with a five-card suit, it will be necessary to keep East off lead, if at all possible, because you would not like a heart lead through your remaining honour. With diamonds the clear suit to attack, all will be well if West started with three and has to win the third round, but you can improve on this by playing low towards dummy twice. If West has to play the queen from queen doubleton you can duck, keeping the danger hand off lead.

3.

♠ K 9 6 5		
♥ J 5 4		
♦ K Q 3		
♣ Q 7 6		
♠ 3		♠ Q 8 2
♥ A K 9		♥ 7 6 3 2
♦ 10 8 7 2		♦ 6 5 4
♣ A 10 5 4 3		♣ J 9 8
	♠ A J 10 7 4	
	♥ Q 10 8	
	♦ A J 9	
	♣ K 2	

You are declarer in 4♠ after three initial passes. West leads the A,K and another heart with East following. How do you plan the play?

The *a priori* odds of playing the trump suit is to bash out the ace and king, hoping that the queen falls in one or two rounds and maybe that is what you have to do here. Certainly, with three inescapable losers outside the trump suit, you cannot afford to lose a spade, but you can glean further information. Before tackling trumps, play the ♣K merely to see who has the ace. If it is West, he cannot hold the ♠Q as well as that would give him thirteen points, when he most definitely

would have opened the bidding. With his actual hand, West might have doubled 1♠, but only holding three hearts and opposite a partner who could not open, it is probably more prudent to pass.

4.

♠ A K 5		
♥ 8 6 4		
♦ K J 8 7		
♣ Q 10 2		
♠ Q J 10 8 3		♠ 9 7 4
♥ 9 3		♥ Q J 10 5 2
♦ 6 5		♦ 4 2
♣ A 7 6 4		♣ J 8 5
	♠ 6 2	
	♥ A K 7	
	♦ A Q 10 9 3	
	♣ K 9 3	

You are declarer in 5♦ and West leads the ♠Q. How do you plan the play?

3NT would have been easy, but, after looking for a possible diamond slam, that particular boat has sailed. With a certain loser in both hearts and clubs it looks as if you have to find the club jack, but it would be much better if you let the defence find that particular card for you. After drawing trumps play the other top spade and ruff the third. Now play the top hearts and exit with the third. Whoever wins will either have to give you a ruff and discard or open up the club suit.

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Bridge and VAT

My name is Jeremy Dhondy and I am the Chairman of the English Bridge Union.

This column is to answer questions or comments about the EBU that you might have.

If you have a comment or a question I would be happy to hear from you. jeremy@mrbridge.co.uk

Q I've seen some recent news about the EBU and their application to be exempt from VAT and also to be regarded as a sport. What is the latest position?

A There has been some progress recently, but first a summary of where we have got to. The EBU have pursued two legal courses. The first is for our competitions to be exempt from VAT and the second is for us to be regarded as a sport by the Government, and in particular, Sport England.

VAT FREE

The VAT case has gone through several HMRC tribunals and eventually ended up in the European Court in Luxembourg. There was a hearing in March and the result of that, when known, will be binding on both sides. It won't be affected by Brexit, whenever that happens (or doesn't!). What has happened recently is that a report prepared for the European Court of Justice has concluded that bridge should be considered a sport for VAT purposes. The Advocate General, who prepared the report, recognised the skill element of duplicate bridge. More importantly, perhaps, he recognised that bridge demonstrated the essential characteristics which make something a sport. He dismissed the idea that there must be a strong physical element. His report was published in the middle of June.



It can be found at the ECJ website at <https://curia.europa.eu>

The EBU would be unwise to count its chickens quite yet, because the report is not binding on the judges. They are expected to make their final decision around October. The effect could be transforming, if they do agree with the Advocate General, because not only would the EBU benefit going forward by the removal of VAT on its competition entry fees, but it could also claim some past VAT back, which could be used for the development of the game. It is possible that clubs will also benefit if they are both registered for VAT and set up for the public benefit: ie membership clubs rather than proprietor owned clubs. All of this is a bit uncertain at present, but a couple of members, with expertise in this area, have offered to assist affiliated clubs if matters develop favourably. It's worth remembering that if all of this does happen, then the EBU will not save as much as 20% on its entry fees, but a smaller percentage as we will lose some exemptions we currently have. Still, it would be nice to be in this position. If we do lose the fight, then I guess we won't be all that popular amongst the European Bridge community, as other EU Bridge Associations will likely find their current exemption under threat.

Our second case has been about recognition. This has been pursued with Sport England through various English courts. We have not been successful and legal action is at an end, at least for the time being, not least because the expense is too high. In our VAT case we have had the good fortune to be represented by a leading tax barrister,



ter, David Ewart, who has helped us and freely given a large amount of time and expertise, for which we are very grateful. There are lots of mixed messages. The government, in

part, does recognise bridge as a sport. For example, the Charities Commission recognises bridge and that is, in part, what helped the EBU to set up the charity English Bridge Education & Development (EBED) in 2014. The International Olympic Committee recognised bridge as long ago as 1995. Bridge was on the long list of activities for the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, but did not make it to the final cut. It was a demonstration sport in the Winter Olympics of 2002 in Salt Lake City and will feature in the Asian Games of 2018.

Other countries' individual Olympic Committees also recognise bridge. Poland is one example and bridge gets significant government funding and status as a consequence of this recognition. Sport England on its own website says, 'We're here to increase the number of people doing sport and activity – no matter what their background, ability or age.' They may argue bridge is not a sport but an activity? Personally, I'd be happy to sign a piece of paper saying we didn't want their money if that is their problem.

The EU via their Erasmus+ pro-

gramme (Sports funding) also recognise bridge as does Sportaccord.

Whether bridge is a game, a sport, an activity, a mind sport or something else causes argument in the pub, at the dinner table and elsewhere. Some will argue that something can't be a sport unless it involves significant physical activity, and moving as East-West in a duplicate doesn't count.

In an early hearing, a government lawyer waxed lyrical about the necessary physical activity and fitness needed to be regarded as a sports person and the activity as a sport. Our lawyer asked if they were thinking of darts. There are many inconsistencies in activities recognised as sports in the UK, eg model aeroplane flying, arm wrestling, baton twirling and frisbee. Whether they should or shouldn't count is not really the point. The point is, rather, as to whether these activities can benefit society. Can 'mind' sports, for example, delay the onset of dementia and keep minds active for longer? Can activities such as bridge assist with promoting social inclusion? I suspect this is going to be a long fight, but the government should want to assist activities that have health benefits and promote social inclusion, even more so as our society ages.

For now, the argument seems to focus on which obscure past law can be quoted to substantiate or knock down the case. The government of the 1930s passed some legislation to put the physical element into the definition of sport. It did this because it was

concerned about the fitness of the nation with a possible war looming. One suspects that this is not the top priority in this century. If we get past the name 'sport' and look at the leisure activities in our society, whether physical or mental, and say that if we promote them, will that lead to a better society for many of us, the answer would be a resounding yes.

Recognition is not all about money. An increased status for bridge would, for example, make it more likely to feature in our schools. That would help the future of the game, especially as we live in an age where playing of cards at home is much less common than it was and the rise of the internet is all encompassing.

EBED are currently looking at the body of research that might indicate whether playing bridge and other games testing mental agility have health benefits. Dr Doug Brown for the Alzheimer's Society said in 2016, 'People who regularly challenge their brains through education, work and leisure activities tend to have lower rates of dementia in later life.'

There is plenty of research out there and now the job is to develop it and pull it together to make an ever stronger case for bridge, so the argument in the pub is not about whether bridge has any physical aspect or whether it should be a sport, but rather that the reason to classify it as such is the benefit it gives to society.

The next few months could well be an important time for the future of our game or activity or mind sport or sport. ■

Catching Up with Sally Brock

I was quite pleased with how the women's events went in Montecatini. I wasn't playing with the strongest team or the strongest partner – but my partner, Debbie, played really well. We nearly qualified for the knock-out stage of the teams, eventually finishing 10th out of 30 (with eight to qualify). In the pairs we did even better, finally ending up fifth. I had a lovely time. Montecatini was full of nice places to eat, often outside, and we went out with different friends every night. Many people complained about the playing conditions, but I didn't think they were too bad. Of course, it was Italy in June and therefore quite hot, but not too bad as long as you weren't far from an air-conditioning unit.

When I got home, I had a few biggish bridge matches. First, a Gold Cup match against an Oxfordshire team which we won comfortably – that means we are now in the quarter-finals. Then we had a Crockfords match at the Young Chelsea. Again we won fairly easily and are now in the final. The following evening we had a Young Chelsea match and won, despite a truly dreadful first half when Barry and I were rescued from oblivion by Frances and Graham in the other room having a storming time.

My father has been ill. He was taken to hospital with

chest pains in the middle of the night. They established that he had not had a heart attack and that his heart was OK. However, they have no real idea of what is wrong with him. He has lost his appetite and therefore lost a lot of weight. He has generally lost all his *joie de vivre*, and is in danger of general deterioration. I went to see him a couple of times and he wasn't great. However, he is now home and feeling a bit happier. He has carers coming in four times a day, and we are hopeful that he might recover sufficiently to enjoy a few good years yet. I'm sure he is depressed after the loss of my mother, and it must be hard for him to pick himself up again. I just hope he can find the mental energy to do so.

On the domestic front, I am delighted with the flat. It's such a nice place to live.

As far as the kids are concerned, Toby has nearly finished his masters degree at Imperial – exams all over, just his project to finish.

Briony has decided she wants to go and live in New Zealand for a while. I can't decide on whether I'm pleased or not – obviously I'll be glad if it makes her happy but the thought of being so far apart is terrifying. Given how much we are both away in the summer, we will only both be in the country for a day or so between now and when she goes. ■





The Joker

An American Addition to the Pack

The Joker was first added as an extra card in American packs, specifically those made in New York around 1864. At that time, Euchre was a popular card game – imported from Germany. In Euchre rules, the highest ranking card is the Jack of the trump suit ('Right Bower', a corruption of the German bauer) followed by the other Jack of the same colour ('Left Bower'). The other cards then rank as expected. Someone then had the idea of a variant, 'Rail-road Euchre' in which there was a 'Best Bower', an additional card outranking all the others. In some versions the card is actually marked 'Best Bower' and in others 'Joker'. As far as we can tell now, these two variants arrived at the same time. Joker has become the name of choice, probably because it is less specific to one game, and perhaps as it is much more catchy.



*Joker from New York c. 1864
Quite possibly the first Joker.*

possible to create light-hearted variants in which the Joker could be used as a 'wild-card', meaning that a player could assign any value, so as to maximise the value of all the cards held. It was also possible to assign the Joker a special role – as the highest or lowest valued card in the trump suit or in the whole pack. A second Joker was added specifically for Canasta. According to Chambers card games, Canasta was invented by, 'bored women in a club in Montevideo, Uruguay around 1940.' By the 1950s, Canasta was briefly more popular than bridge in the USA.



Jokers in England

The first English Joker was made by Goodall. This arose from a collaboration with an American, Victor E Mauger. Mauger was a distributor and seller of cards but was not a card maker, so he bought supplies from Goodall, who were at the time the largest playing-card manufacturer in the world. As a result of their American connection, Goodall were introduced to the Joker ahead of their English competitors.



*Ace of Spades showing
the collaboration between
Goodall and Mauger.
Joker from Mauger c 1870,
made by Goodall & Co.*

More Jokers

Incidentally, the idea of an additional card was not exactly new. English manufacturers occasionally included a blank card from the early 1800s, which was intended to be used as a replacement so that the pack could continue to be used if a single card went missing. The new idea was that the Joker was an integral part of the game. Nowadays, in a new pack you may sometimes see both a Joker, or two Jokers, and additional blank cards – and even bridge scoring tables.

Once the Joker appeared, it began to take on a slightly different character. For games other than Euchre, it was

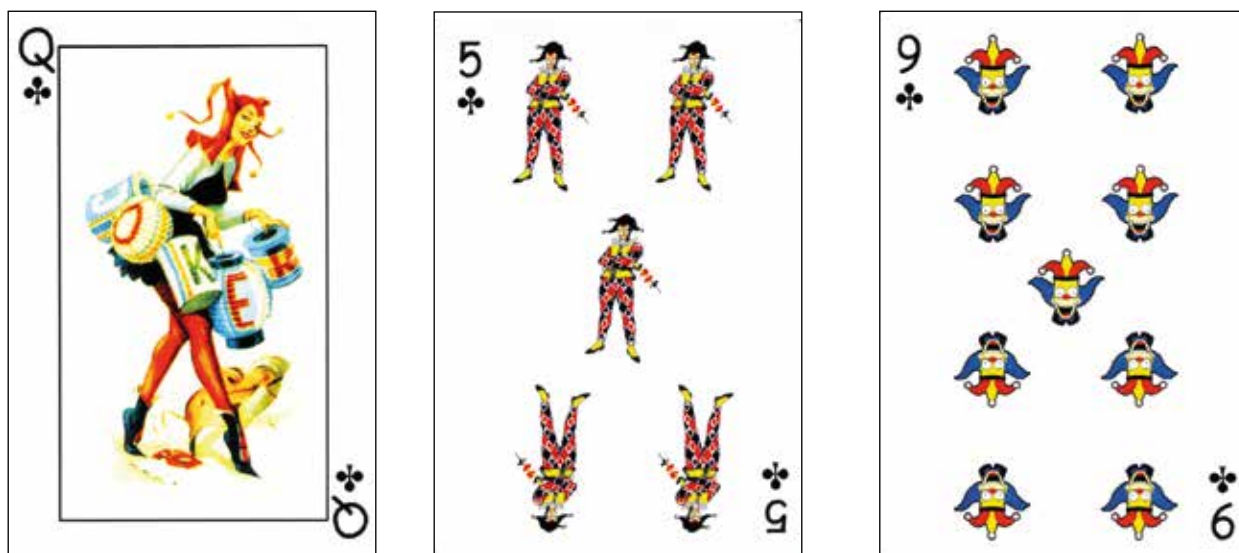
Variety

One of the appealing qualities of the Joker is that it does not have a standard design. Instead, manufacturers have designed their own Jokers to give their packs a more distinctive character. These are often slightly humorous, colourful and occasionally a little sinister. Below we show a sample of Jokers showing some of the variety. As a result, there are now collectors who collect just Jokers – taking out the Joker is bemoaned by collectors of whole packs, of course!



An international selection of modern Jokers: [L-R] Oberg's (Sweden), USPC Bicycle (USA), Modiano (Italy)

Lastly, the American collectors club is called 52+Joker, a name that recognises the significance of the Joker as a truly American addition to the pack. Each year the Club produces a deck for members only, and one such deck featured Jokers on every card. This is an entertaining and clever design, some of the cards are shown below. ■



Examples of Cards from 'Jokers 1' by 52+Joker

The author is a Court Assistant in the Worshipful Company of Makers of Playing Cards – see www.makersofplayingcards.co.uk. Many more sets of cards are illustrated on the author's website www.plainbacks.com



When the ♠10 was played, Luke Myras had no good card to play. If he threw a diamond honour, declarer would discard a heart from dummy and score two diamond tricks. He chose instead to discard the ♥J, but Father Gulwynne then called for a diamond discard. He continued with the ♥9 and dummy's ♥6 was set up as a twelfth trick. The slam had been made.

'Did you 'ave the jack of diamonds, my love?' Myras enquired.

'I didn't 'ave no good card at all,' his wife replied. 'Totally useless 'and. I knew they was going to make it.'

'Ah well, nothing we could do in that case,' Luke Myras concluded.


Father Gulwynne returned his cards to the worn wooden board. As it happened, a lead of the other red king would have sunk the slam. The Good Lord himself would have gone down.

With several good boards already on their card, the priests faced the Bishop of Durham. A slender man with little appetite for rich food, he looked disapprovingly at Friar Tuck. Rather than donating every coin to the local poor, it seemed that he spent his money on pies and puddings.

'You are faring well, your Grace?' queried Friar Tuck.

'Well enough,' the Bishop replied. 'It's your partner to speak.'

Dealer South. E/W Game.

♠ 5 2			
♥ Q 8 3			
♦ A Q 9 8			
♣ A 8 7 3			
♠ K Q J 8 7 6		♠ 10 9 4	
♥ Void		♥ 10 9 5 4 2	
♦ J 10 4		♦ 5	
♣ K J 5 4		♣ Q 9 6 2	
♠ A 3			
♥ A K J 7 6			
♦ K 7 6 3 2			
♣ 10			

West	North	East	South
Bishop of Durham	Friar Tuck	Canon Bunte	Father Gulwynne
1♠	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	4♥	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♥	Pass	6♥
All Pass			

Father Gulwynne won the spade lead and continued with a trump to dummy's queen. Friar Tuck winced as West showed out on this trick. Perhaps 6♦ would have been a better contract. By bidding the hand more slowly, he could have discovered whether South held five diamonds. 'Eight of hearts, please,' said Gulwynne.

The grey-complexioned Canon Bunte covered with the ♥9 and declarer won with the jack. After a club to the ace he was able to lead the ♥3, benefitting from his previous unblock of the ♥8. East followed with the ♥4 and Father Gulwynne finessed the ♥7. He drew East's remaining trumps with the ace and king and discarded the ♦8 from dummy. He then played the ace, queen and nine of diamonds, overtaking with his king. Five tricks in the suit allowed him to claim the contract.


'A pretty contract,' Tuck observed. 'You had to unblock both the red eights.'

Gulwynne obviously thought nothing of such a play. 'Only a bumble-head would do otherwise,' he retorted.

The Bishop thrust his cards back into the wooden board. Did these apologies for priests do any of the Good Lord's work? It seemed they spent the whole time playing cards and gorging themselves. They probably followed the same despicable lifestyle even during Lent.

The first session was drawing to its close when two expensively-dressed members of the court arrived, Annette Blochet and Lady Gwynnyth de Vries. On the second board Father Gulwynne had yet another slam to play:

Dealer East. Game All.

♠ Q 9 2			
♥ 8 6 3 2			
♦ A			
♣ A K Q J 10			
♠ J 8 7 3		♠ 4	
♥ K 5		♥ Q 10 9 4	
♦ K Q J 7 5		♦ 10 9 8 2	
♣ 8 4		♣ 7 5 3 2	
♠ A K 10 6 5			
♥ A J 7			
♦ 6 4 3			
♣ 9 6			

West	North	East	South
Lady Gwynnyth	Friar Tuck	Annette Blochet	Father Gulwynne
Pass	3♣	Pass	1♠
Pass	4♦	Pass	3♣
Pass	6♠	All Pass	4♥

The ♦K was led and down went the dummy. 'Upon my word, what strange bidding!' exclaimed Annette Blochet. 'Have you men of the cloth not heard of the Richmond 4NT to ask for aces? Everyone at court plays that device nowadays.'

'Except for poor Emeline Valbeque,' added Annette Blochet. 'I tried to explain it to her but since her eightieth birthday, she says she rarely bids any slams.'

Father Gulwynne won the diamond lead and paused to plan the play. He could discard two hearts and a diamond on the clubs. The remaining diamond could be ruffed in the dummy. What would happen if trumps were 4-1?

Spared a heart lead, he could afford to lose a trump trick and still make the slam. Mind you, this would have to be done when there was still a trump in dummy to guard against a diamond continuation. 'Play the trump nine,' he said.

The ♠9 was run to West's jack. Gulwynne won the club return, reached his hand with the ♥A and ruffed a diamond with the ♠Q. He then drew trumps, pleased to see that West had started with four. 'Two hearts and a diamond go on the clubs,' he said, claiming the remaining tricks.

'What an excellent session!' Friar Tuck exclaimed, as the two priests left the playing hall. 'Why don't we go and celebrate with a ham and veal pasty? There's plenty of time to visit the Owl and Falcon down the road. I don't play well on an empty stomach.'

Gulwynne had seen the size of Tuck's lunch just an hour before the start of play. How could his stomach possibly be empty? 'I'll join you for the walk, but I won't eat,' he replied. 'Nor will you or I touch a drop of ale. After a session like that I can see those gold sovereigns dancing in front of my eyes. We can sink a pint or two when the event's over!'



Missing More Honours

Last month, we were concentrating on combinations where you were missing two honours of different rank, such as king-jack, and how you finesse the lower missing card and then finesse the higher missing card.

This month we shall look at more combinations and see how our general technique changes slightly depending on what assets we have. One of the general principles we learned was that usually we try and finesse the lower card that might win the trick first, and we can extend that to a card that won't win the trick, but might build up a winner for us. This is a simple example:



You have one winner in the form of the ace, and you need to build up a second trick. What are your possible options?

Leading the ace and then another one will work only in a few tiny cases, where there is a doubleton K-Q, or a bare honour offside (assuming you come back to hand before you lead the second round). I think we can discount that as a serious contender.

Our two main choices are low to the 9 and low to the jack.

Leading low to the jack will gain when the king **and** the queen lie onside, a 24% chance. (Two cards split 2-0 48% of the time, so two honours onside is half of this: 24%).

If leading low to the jack loses to the queen or king, then that is the end of the matter since the opponents have the king or queen, and the ten.

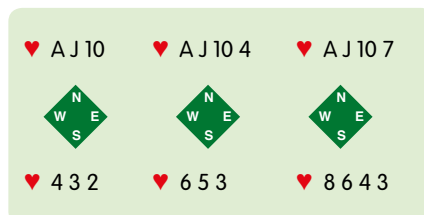
What about leading low to the 9? It will never win the trick (surely a

player with K-Q-10-x onside will split his honours), but it might force out the king or queen; on the next round you then lead low to the jack and hope that wins the trick.

What do we need for this play to succeed? We need the ten to be onside and at least one of the king and queen to be onside as well. This gives us odds of 37% to which we can add a smidgen for K-Q doubleton onside. So that is clearly the better line.

There is one further issue we need to consider for this combination before we move on. We did not include K-Q-x onside in our winning layouts, as it is assumed that a defender with K-Q-x who is looking at A-J-9 in the dummy will play low, in the expectation that we will go wrong by finessing the nine. The corollary to this is that if that defender instead rises with the king or queen, you should expect him to hold H-10-x rather than H-H-x. In reality, most defenders are not that resourceful, so that if you lead towards the A-J-9 and a defender rises with the king or queen, you should prefer to believe they are splitting their honours to guarantee a trick, as that will be true most of the time. On balance, I would win the ace and come back to hand to lead up to the jack. If that defender does indeed hold H-10-x, I would pay off to their brilliancy, congratulate them on a great play and move on to the next deal.

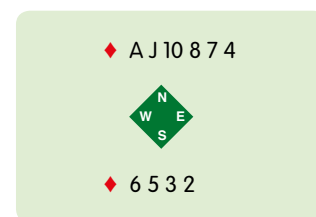
Let's look at some easier combinations now, and make it just the king and queen that you are missing:



In each case, you lead low to the ten/jack and when it loses, come back to hand and lead low to the remaining honour. You will be successful (making a second trick on the first example, and extra tricks depending on how the suit splits on the other two) whenever the king **or** the queen **or** both lie onside, a 76% chance.

How many cards do we need in the suit before it becomes wrong to take the double finesse?

The answer is that it is always right to play the A-J-10 combination by finessing and then finessing again.



Here you are missing just the king, queen and 9. When you lead towards the strength and the next hand plays an honour, you can win it and be certain of five tricks. If the next hand follows with the 9, however, it is 100% to finesse the ten, you don't mind it losing even to a singleton honour since the other one will be certain to drop on the next round.

The combination that causes a lot of heartache is this one:



You lead low to the jack and it loses to an honour. You come back to hand and lead low towards the A-10 and the

other honour does not appear. Should you finesse or play for the drop?

Once again, you should take a second finesse. You will lose only to a holding of K-Q doubleton offside. If, instead, you backpedal by cashing the ace at this point, you will cater for K-Q doubleton offside but at the expense of losing to a singleton honour offside, a holding which is more likely. (A third option of starting by cashing the ace is a poor choice. It too caters for K-Q doubleton offside, but at the considerable expense of losing to K-Q-x and K-Q-x-x onside.) So with all that in mind how do you play this hand against two experts at your local club?

♠ A 10 7 6
♥ Q 4 3 2
♦ A J 7
♣ K 3



♠ J 9 5 3 2
♥ A K J 7
♦ 9 8 4
♣ 6

The auction is competitive, East starts the bidding with 1NT (12-14). You overcall 2♣ for the majors and partner responds 2♦ asking for your better major. You bid 2♠ and he raises you briskly to game. West leads the ♣5.

You expect the ♣A to be offside since an ace underlead is unlikely at trick one, but you confidently play low from the dummy and hope East with ♣A-J-x-x puts up the ace. No such luck, he wins the ♣Q and continues with the ♣A which you ruff.

What now?

Knowing the percentages

as well as you do, you recognise this trump suit as one we have discussed earlier, and the percentage play is to take two finesses – can you see why that is wrong on this hand?

Taking two finesses is the right line of play in theory, as it guards against K-Q-x or K-Q-x-x onside, but if that were the case here, East would have a small singleton or a void, both holdings we can rule out due to the opening bid of 1NT.

Instead, we cash the ace of trumps and East follows with the queen. This must be from K-Q stiff and we can, if we wish, play another one and clear trumps. Before we do so, we might be tempted to cash a few hearts to stop East getting safely off lead in that suit, but a quick rethink tells us this is a bad idea – East is marked with a doubleton spade and thus likely to have three hearts. (West would probably have led his singleton heart at trick one if East had four hearts and East might not have opened 1NT with 2-2 in the majors). So if we cash three rounds, West will ruff in with his small trump. So we play another trump and East wins and, predictably, exits with a heart. We cash a few of those ending in hand and they are indeed 3-2 with East having three.

As East has turned up with the ♣A-Q and ♠K-Q, he is likely to have a diamond honour, so the percentage play in this suit is still to play low to the seven and hope that ♦Q-10-x(x) or ♦K-10-x(x) is onside. So we lead a low diamond and West plays the king – has that changed our view?

We win the ace in dummy and cross back to hand with another spade, undecided, and lead a diamond back up

to dummy. Now it's crunch time – do we play the jack or run our 8 round?

Let's think about what we know about the hand. East began with ♠K-Q and ♥x-x-x. He turned up with ♣A-Q and if we knew that West had the ♣J (likely if East's ♣Q at trick one was a true card), then we could be pretty sure East must have the ♦Q to make his point count up from 11 to 13.

This is where watching the pips early on comes in so handy! West looked as if he was leading from an honour (the ♣5 was led, remember, which can't really be second highest from a bad suit), but could it have been from the ten? That would mean the E/W hands might have started something like this:

♠ 8 4 ♠ K Q
♥ 9 6 ♥ 10 8 5
♦ K Q 6 2 ♦ 10 5 3
♣ 10 8 7 5 2 ♣ A Q J 9 4

That is consistent with the bidding, but hang on, if you were West on lead to 4♠ wouldn't you lead the ♦K? I know I would, and it is therefore more likely that West's diamonds are K-10 rather than K-Q. You let the ♦8 run and this forces the queen and gives you your game, the full hand being:

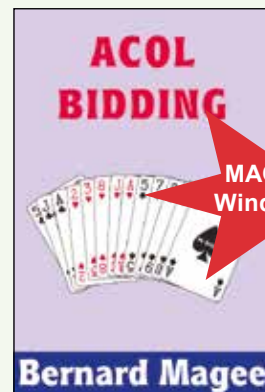
♠ A 10 7 6
♥ Q 4 3 2
♦ A J 7
♣ K 3

♠ 8 4 ♠ K Q
♥ 9 6 ♥ 10 8 5
♦ K 10 6 2 ♦ Q 5 3
♣ J 9 7 5 2 ♣ A Q 10 8 4

♠ J 9 5 3 2
♥ A K J 7
♦ 9 8 4
♣ 6

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Claims

Claims speed up bridge and, in general, are a good idea. Many players find it quite annoying when declarer plays a hand out very slowly, seeming to pause and think before every trick and at the end, the defence realise that declarer had all the tricks and everyone's time was being wasted. Of course, less experienced players sometimes find it difficult to express themselves or to be confident they have all the tricks and it is reasonable that they should claim rarely. Surely, everyone can claim when they have only winning trumps left!

Some players object to claims for two reasons, first because sometime they had a bad experience when making a faulty claim and they were ruled against and second because some declarers who claim do not explain the claim or do not explain it well enough for them to understand. Players who are less confident should wait until they are sure they have all the tricks (or sure they have all the tricks except the last one or two), but still should claim once it is obvious. More experienced players should make a claim clearly, so their opponents understand. It is more important to explain the claim very clearly if your opponents are less experienced. Also it is a requirement of law that the claimer puts his hand down on the table so everyone can see it: too many people claim holding their hand in such a way that each opponent can only see some of the cards.

If you do not understand the claim, you can always ask the claimer to explain it more clearly and if you have any doubts as to whether it is right, then call the director. Do not get into an argument with claimer and do not ask him to play on. Until very recently

it was illegal for play to continue, but it has just become legal, if and only if, all four players agree. If claimer has made a mistake he will probably realise it and correct it, and that is now legal. It is never to the advantage of the non-claiming side to play on: they should always accept the claim or call the director.

Suppose you are the director and you are called. First, you should always ask what the contract is and who claimed: it can be quite confusing when no-one tells you what is trumps. The claimer is required to face his cards on the table so make sure he does so now, if he has not already done so. Then ask the claimer to repeat what he said at the time. This is very important: often the claimer decides to embellish it (usually because he has realised what the problem is) and you do not want his current explanation: you want to know what he said originally. Check with the other players that you have been told accurately. For example, many claims are made with a trump out and when you get to the table claimer will say he was going to draw trumps: that is not important, what is important is whether in his original claim he said he was drawing trumps.

There is one problem that sometimes occurs: claimer attempted to claim and was interrupted by opponents who would not let him finish his claim. If you judge that may have occurred, then you invite him to state his claim in full now, making sure the opponents do not talk over him. One of the problems with contested claims is that the two sides often try to talk at the same time: you have to stop that and keep control.

Suppose you are confident that you

Part One

have heard what was said originally, or what he says now, if he was not allowed to finish originally. Now, you ask the opposition to put their cards face up on the table and tell you what is wrong with the claim, one opponent at a time. The claimer will often try to interrupt: do not let him. Make sure everyone has their say, dummy included, but players speaking one at a time. Having got all the facts and knowing what cards are left (it is often best to write the cards left down), you tell them to put a score in the Bridgmate or on the traveller, probably as though the claim was accepted, but make it clear this is not a ruling, and when you have made a decision, the result may be changed. Then let them play the next board. Claims are like other judgement rulings, as when someone hesitates: you do not decide immediately, and usually you should consult with someone else before deciding.

How do you decide? Assume the claimer is declarer, which is usual. If you feel confident that you know how declarer will play, then you allow it. For example, if declarer is claiming three tricks holding A-K-x in dummy and Q-x in hand, you should not be interested when the opponents say he might play the ace first and block the suit. Claims do not fail because an opponent finds a ridiculous line. Let us look at a couple of examples:

Hand A

♠ Q J x		♠ K x
♥ A K		♥ —
♦ —		♦ —
♣ J		♣ 5 4 3 2

6♥ by West

Hand B

♠ A K 10 x x		♠ Q 9 x x
♥ A		♥ Q x x
♦ —		♦ —
♣ Q		♣ —

6♠ by West

In Hand A, West says, 'All mine.' The ♠A and the ♣A, ♠K and ♣Q have all been played. But there is a trump out. How do you rule? When you are called to the table declarer says, 'Of course, I draw the trump.' He did not say it when he made his claim. So long as the player holding the trump does not have to follow suit to three rounds of spades and a club, then you give the defence a trick. A player who does not mention one outstanding trump when he claims has usually forgotten it. Even if he has not, he should be ruled against in case he has, and, next time, will be more careful with his claim.

In Hand B, West says, 'All mine, drawing trumps.' The ♣Q is good. But there is a safety play in spades: if you cash the ace or king first, then if someone shows out you can play spades safely for five tricks. But players often forget this and cash the queen first. They will be all right unless North holds ♠J-x-x-x. So you give the defence a trick only if North does have this holding. Declarer will now tell you that he would obviously have done the safety play, but if that is true, why did he not mention it when he claimed? If he is that casual in his claim statement, then he might easily have been that casual if he played the hand out.

In a future article, we shall consider some of the other problems with claims and give a few more examples. ■

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Penalty or Take-Out Double?

Q Can you comment on the N/S bidding? How would you bid the South hand?

Dealer North. E/W Game.

♠ A
♥ J 9 6 3 2
♦ Q J 10 8 6
♣ K 6



♠ Q 5
♥ Q 7
♦ 9 3 2
♣ A Q 10 9 7 4

West	North	East	South
	1♥	1NT	Dbl
3♣	Pass	4♣	Dbl
Pass	5♦	Dbl	5♥
Pass	Pass	Dbl	All Pass

Can South's first double be anything other than penalty?

Huw Jones, Swansea.

A South's double (of 1NT) is universally played as for penalty. With 10 HCP and a good suit to lead, it is a reasonable action.

I do not agree with South's subsequent double of 4♣ – this is a case of bidding the hand twice. The double of 1NT already showed 9 or 10 points upwards. What does South have in reserve?

Nor do I agree with North's 5♦ bid. Making a sacrifice bid after partner has made a penalty double is almost never right. If wishing to suggest a 5♦ contract, North should bid 4♦ over 3♣. It is illogical to pass over 3♣ and then bid 5♦. I do not think North should bid 4♦ on this hand, but it would be better to consult partner by doing so than to make a unilateral 5♦ bid later.



Q We stopped in a part-score with 13 tricks makeable.

Could you explain how to improve the result?

Dealer South. Love All.

♠ 10 9 4 2
♥ A Q 5 4 3
♦ Void
♣ J 10 8 7

♠ 7 6 5
♥ K 6
♦ A Q 5 4 3
♣ 9 5 2

♠ K J 3
♥ 9 7 2
♦ K 10 9 7 6
♣ Q 4

West	North	East	South
			1NT
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥	All Pass	

Geoff Simpson, Aberdeenshire.

A 1. When playing a strong no-trump, I often play that the only weak Stayman auction is to bid 2♣ and pass the reply, all continuations by responder being at least invitational, including the one you give. If your agreement is that North's sequence is consistent with a Yarborough, 'drop dead Stayman', it is better to start with a 2♦ transfer and rebid 2♣. While most new suits bid by responder following a transfer create a game force, you can play this as only invitational.

While I accept that in terms of high cards, South is minimum for a strong no-trump, the J-10-8 of hearts is worth much more than one point, once you find that partner's main suit is hearts – the fast winners in clubs look good too. Assuming that North follows an invitational sequence, South's best continuation is 3♣. This cannot express a desire to play in clubs facing a hand that has shown both majors, so must show the values to raise hearts with a concentration in clubs. News of club values plus heart support is just what North wants to hear.

2. If 1NT was weak, South having downgraded the hand because of the 4333 shape, you are struggling

a bit to reach game. North is not going to envisage game facing a weak no-trump, unless perhaps South is maximum with four hearts. I do not like going against the field and would only downgrade a hand with a 4333 shape and poor intermediate cards.



Q My partner and I use transfer bids over a 1NT opening and find them very useful. However, should they only be used on a weak hand?

♠ Q 9 2
♥ A Q 2
♦ K J
♣ J 8 7 6 5



♠ A J 10 8 4
♥ 9
♦ Q 6 5
♣ A Q 9 2

North	South
1NT	2♥
2♣	3♣
4♣	5♣

We did actually make 5♣. I think 3NT would have made. Is this a correct use of transfer bids and, if not, what would be

**your recommendation
for my response to my
partner's initial 1NT bid?**

Ann Yeldon,
Seaford, East Sussex.

A One of the beauties of transfer bids is that you can use them on both strong hands and on weak. The 1NT-2♥-2♠-3♣ start is eminently correct.

Looking at the two hands, 4♠, played with the lead coming up to the ♥A-Q, seems to be the best spot. Even if neither black suit plays without loss, you can expect to make 4♠. The interesting question is whether opener's raise to 4♣ should show (or deny) three spades as well as four or five clubs. Many partnerships would not have an agreement about this. There is a case for opener to bid 3♠ over 3♣ despite the club support, because a club slam is unlikely with so many values in the red suits.

♣♦♥♠

Q Our bidding was as follows, settling in a part score when a slam was makeable.

♠ Q 9 4
♥ Void
♦ A K Q 9 8 6 5 3
♣ A 8



♠ A 7 6 3
♥ J 8 4
♦ 7 4
♣ K 4 3 2

West	North	East	South
1♠	Dbl	Pass	2♣
Pass	3♦	All Pass	

1. Would it have been

**better for North to have
jumped straight to 5♦
after the 1♠ bid?**

**2. Is North's jump to 3♦
after a double forcing for
one round or to game?**

**3. How would you
bid the hands?**

Angela Buckley by email.

A North's double followed by a jump to 3♦ shows a strong hand and good diamonds, something like an Acol two in diamonds. Yes, I think it should create a one round force. Even if you play it as non-forcing, South's pass is inexplicable. 2♣ was a forced action. South has an ace and a king more than promised. I must admit I would have bid 3NT on the South hand over 3♦, which does not play well on a heart lead.

North has a tricky hand to bid. An initial double with a void in hearts is unattractive, as is an immediate 3NT overcall. The route chosen seems as good as any.

♣♦♥♠

Q My partner and I, at rubber bridge, play a strong no-trump (16-18) and five-card majors with a prepared club. We held:

♠ A 3
♥ A J 10 8 7
♦ A 10 3
♣ K J 5



♠ K Q 10 9 8 6 4 2
♥ Void
♦ K
♣ Q 9 4 3

Do you agree with a 1♥

**opening by North? How
could we reach a slam?**

Patrick Cliff,
Uckfield, Sussex

A Playing a 16-18 1NT opening, I disagree with the 1♥ opening. If you open 1♥ and rebid 2NT after a 1♠ response, that shows 19-20. While adding something for the decent five-card suit is fair enough, you are adding two points to the basic 17 if you do that. As it happens, overbidding via the 1♥ opening might help the partnership reach a slam, because South is surely never stopping short facing what sounds like 19-20 points.

Playing a 15-17 1NT opening, it is reasonable to upgrade the North hand into the 18-19 range and start with 1♥. Again South is very interested in a slam after the start of 1♥-1♠-2NT. Incidentally, a 15-17 1NT opening has the advantage of giving a three-point range for the 1NT rebid, 12-14. Playing a 16-18 1NT opening, the 1NT rebid range of 12-15 is a bit too wide for most people.

Now suppose North opens 1NT, as seems normal playing a 16-18 1NT opening. South might then use Gerber to discover that North holds three aces and one king. On a bad day, the ace-king of clubs are missing and the opponents cash the first two tricks. Most of the time 6♠ will have play facing three aces and one king.

At duplicate, with more system available, it might be easier to get to 6♠.

♣♦♥♠

Q Should I have rebid 2♥ on the following hand? I chose 3♥ because I had a five-loser hand.

♠ A Q J 9 5
♥ Q J 10 9 4
♦ A 6
♣ 9

Me	Partner
1♠	2♣
?	

**We got to an awful
6♥ contract, which,
undeservedly, I made.**

Martin Epstein by email.

A With only 14 HCP, I would definitely rebid 2♥ rather than 3♥. At the point partner responded 2♣, you did not know of a fit – and the losing count trick only works, or stands a fair chance of working, when you have a fit. It is now standard to play a simple 2♥ rebid (after the two level response) as forcing for one round, so you do not need to worry about missing game if you rebid 2♥.

♣♦♥♠

Q LHO opens 1♥, partner doubles, RHO passes.

**What does a jump
cue bid of 3♥ show?**

**LHO opens 1♠, partner
doubles, RHO passes.**

**What does a jump
cue bid of 3♣ show?**

Simon Gottschalk,
Pendoylan, Glamorgan.

A Most pairs would not have an agreement. With one partner, I have played that the jump cue bid shows a game-forcing two suited hand.

♣♦♥♠

Q With neither side vulnerable and at IMP scoring, you hold:





♠ A K 8 2
♥ 9 6 3
♦ Q J 8 4
♣ 10 3

West	North	East	South
1♦	Pass	1♠	5♣
5♦	Pass	?	

Do you raise?

Name and address supplied.

A It would depend a bit upon who partner is. Facing a cautious bidder, I would raise to 6♦. I do not think I would raise with an aggressive bidder, particularly if we are playing Benjamin, which would eliminate some possible opening hands. You need to bear in mind that a very long club suit on your left means suits will not break kindly and that any finesses in the heart suit are likely to fail.

Here are a couple of possible hands for partner:

Hand A

♠ Q 7
♥ A J 7 4
♦ A K 9 7 6 5 3
♣ Void



Hand B

♠ 7
♥ A K 7 4
♦ A K 9 7 6 5 3
♣ 4



Opposite Hand A, you have only eleven obvious tricks and a slam seems to depend on squeezing North in the majors. A slam is hopeless opposite Hand B.

As you can see, if the opponents have a club trick to cash, partner might need the A-K-Q of hearts for a slam to be good.



What is a '2/1 system'? I have come across it online at BBO and have played against it on holiday in Portugal.

Most of the club played 2/1 and with the language barrier we didn't know about it. (I am sure you can imagine the result: 34%.)

Alun Williams,
Llanfairpwll, Anglesey.



When people talk about a 2/1 system it means that a non-jump change-of-suit response in an uncontested auction by an unpassed hand creates a game force:

West	North	East	South
1♠	Pass	2♦	

East shows at least four diamonds and at least 12 or 13 points.

The 2/1 system is quite popular in America and in online games; indeed BBO robots all play 2/1.

When playing 2/1, you need to have an arrangement about how to handle the wider range of responding hands that are worth a response, but not worth a game force. It is common for 2/1 players to play a forcing 1NT response, which gives responder the chance to make a second bid and so differentiate minimum responding hands from those worth inviting game.

Also, you do not need to play strong jump shifts at the three level by responder because a two-level response already covers strong hands, so jumps in a new suit to the three level will mean something else, typically some sort of raise of opener's suit.



In a club duplicate, my partner dealt when I held:

♠ K 7 2
♥ K Q J 4
♦ 6 4
♣ A K Q 5



Me	Partner
1♥	1♦
2♠	2♣
End	3NT

'Temptation to jump to 6♣; if I use Blackwood and he answers 5♦, with just one ace, we are in trouble. In that eventuality, I would like to settle for 5NT but he would take it as asking for kings.

You will not be surprised to hear that we made a slam.

What should I have done?
Rupert Timpson by email.



Since a raise of 2♣ to 3♣ would not be forcing, you were right to dismiss that. You were right too not just to jump to 3NT, ruling out a club slam. Although you could jump from 2♣ to 4♣, which would be forcing, going via fourth suit as you did seems fine. You should have carried through your plan, however, and bid 4♣ over 3NT. Given how good your clubs are, and hence how weak partner's are going to be, it is unlikely that partner will get excited – but at least you have a chance this way.

Some pairs play fourth suit as game forcing, which might avoid this problem. Partner could then rebid 2NT rather than 3NT, giving you room to continue with 3♣ and leaving more room to explore. ■

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Answers to Bernard Magee's Bidding Quizzes 1-3 on the Cover and page 7

1. Dealer West. Game All.

♠ J 7 6 5 4 3 ♠ 2
♥ Q 8 6 4 2 ♥ A 3
♦ A Q ♦ K 8 7 2
♣ Void ♣ K Q 7 6 5 3



West North East South
?

Pass.

Just nine points, but with eleven cards in your two long suits, you might chance a call. I like to relabel the 'rule of 20' as the 'guideline of 20'. This suggests that if you add the length of your two longest suits to your high card points, then if it equals or exceeds 20 you should consider opening.

As a guideline, you will realise that you just consider an opening rather than automatically open. The final decision tends to rest on the quality of your two long suits. Here, your suits are very poor indeed and if you open you will only score well if you find a fit. If not, you will probably end up far too high. If you do open, the East shown will probably bid to 3NT and whether you pass or convert to one of the majors, you will be far too high and will lose a lot of points.

Pass and then try to come in later, if possible – by doing this you will have limited the strength of your hand so that your partner will not go for game.

2. Dealer West. Love All.

♠ A 8 ♠ Q 7 6 4
♥ K Q 4 3 2 ♥ 9 6
♦ A K 8 7 2 ♦ 9 4
♣ 2 ♣ A J 6 5 3



West North East South
1♥ Pass 1♠ Pass
?

2♦.

With 16 high card points and two five-card suits, you may feel the need to show your strength. However, your first job is to find out whether you have a fit, because these kinds of hands do not do well when there is no fit with partner. If you rebid 3♦, you force your partnership to game – a new suit at the three-level. Considering that your partner might have just six high card points, you certainly cannot guarantee a game.

Bid just 2♦ and see how things progress.

3. Dealer East. Love All.

♠ Void ♠ A K J 5 4
♥ K 7 6 4 2 ♥ 9 5
♦ K 9 8 7 6 ♦ 4 3
♣ Q 4 3 ♣ K J 6 5



West North East South
? 1♠ Pass

1NT.

A lovely distributional hand, but your partner opens in your void suit. When your long suits are robust you can sometimes afford to bid them when you are light on high card points. However, when you have just one high card in each of your suits, you need the requisite high card points to bid at the two level.

To bid a new suit at the two-level, you need at least nine high card points or 10 total points. Your two long suits are weak, so you should settle for a 1NT response.

It feels difficult to respond 1NT with such a distributional hand, but by doing so, you slow the auction down when there is a misfit. Over 1NT, East rebids 2♣ and now you might choose to pass: any higher contracts will have little chance of success.

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39 DRAWING TRUMPS

This seminar sounds straightforward, but we will not be simply drawing trumps, we will be considering the reasons for delaying. Keeping control of trumps is an important part of declarer play.

40 FIVE-CARD MAJORS

Popular around the world, this method is becoming more popular here.

41 FUNDAMENTALS OF DEFENCE

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Teaching Drawing Trumps

A bridge teacher gave a lesson on the use of the trump suit; it was quite a comprehensive exposition of the subject. He covered drawing trumps, ruffing in dummy, the cross ruff and ruffing out a suit. He also intended to explain 'reverse dummy play', but ran out of time. At the end of his 60 minute talk, he asked for questions from his students, but was met with silence. This didn't really surprise him as he was sure he had explained everything very clearly. Feeling quite confident he said, 'Surely someone has a question? No matter how trivial it might seem, I want to hear it.' Eventually a man from the back of the class slowly raised his hand. 'A few of us at this table have been wondering the same thing,' he said, 'What exactly are trumps?'

Well I hope my lessons and yours are better than that! But the fact remains that many beginners only really learn with the cards in their hands. That doesn't mean there is no place for the spoken lesson, I just keep it short. My first spoken lesson on drawing trumps lasts about 12 minutes and I show them only one hand. The rest of the hour is spent playing prepared hands (with set contracts) taking turns to be declarer. As there is no bidding only three students are needed at each table. They are told in advance that trumps should be drawn every time but a fair number don't do it and get a master card ruffed.

Of course, you need to count the trumps too. It's simple arithmetic but with other things happening in the hand, it's easier said than done, especially if it can't be done in one go. The 'count down' method is best, this means when dummy goes down you total your trumps and subtract from

13, thus getting the number of trumps held by your opponents, which you count down to zero as you draw them. This means if declarer or dummy ruffs early it doesn't affect the count, which happens if you use any other method.



To ensure that all students understand this, there is a 'trump counter' on each table (as shown above). When dummy goes down, declarer sets the trump counter to the number of trumps held by the opponents. Every time he draws a round of trumps he resets the counter until it reaches zero. For example, if the declarer has eight trumps and they break 3-2 the count will go 5, 3, 1, 0. If declarer forgets, the others remind him. Even those who don't need it are asked to use it as they may have used another method and I want them to change.

I made these counters from ceiling roses and volume controls from old transistor radios. I'm sure dials like these are produced for other purposes, but I haven't been able to source any. You could just write the numbers down on a card and score them out but the counters are better and good fun. They really work and the students

like them.

The counters are only used at my early lessons on drawing trumps. However the 'count down' method can be used to count the work suit at no-trumps and side suits when another suit is trumps. In fact, with practice you don't need to count at all. If you have eight cards you think, 'I hope they break 3-2,' and if both follow for two rounds, they are 3-2, if not they are 4-1 or 5-0. Similarly, if you have nine cards, you hope for 2-2 till you find out otherwise, with seven cards you hope for 3-3, but, of course, both are against the odds. Once you concentrate on finding out 'the break' no counting is needed.

I tell beginners to draw trumps 'immediately, if not sooner' unless there is a good reason to do otherwise. Until they have been taught the exceptions (like ruffing in dummy), I want them to be 'quick on the draw'. Some learn this skill quickly but others take years to do it, some never do. They can't resist cashing just a few winners first before drawing trumps; claiming the risk of being ruffed is low and they often get away with it. My response is, 'Why take unnecessary risks? I want these side suit winners as much as you do, but not just yet!' (To paraphrase St Augustine's prayer).

Some put off drawing trumps to 'ruff in hand' which rarely gains and often loses. For after trumps are drawn, the trumps left in your hand are 'automatic tricks', they don't need your help, they will win anyway, even if you played blindfold.

Why some people don't draw trumps despite years of 'good' teaching has baffled me for many years. It's one of life's mysteries. Perhaps I'm just more aware of the problem than other

teachers as the second half of all my classes is random hands with the card play recorded, so nothing is missed, which has its good side and bad side.

Another reason beginners give for not drawing trumps is that, 'my trumps aren't good enough; I have too many top trumps missing.' Declarer might hold ♥Q-J-x-x-x opposite ♥10-x-x, and perhaps think that if they don't draw trumps the ace and king will somehow disappear or maybe they don't want to lose the lead early on. If they don't draw trumps, they will lose the ace and king anyway, but the opponents' small trumps may take tricks by ruffing.

What if your trumps are ♣J-x-x-x opposite ♣K-x-x or even ♦A-Q-x-x opposite ♦J-x, which can happen if a one opening is passed out or a forcing bid is passed. Such trump holdings are never covered in the text books, they are not supposed to happen but they do quite a lot, especially with beginners. If your trumps are that bad you should probably be in no-trumps. You therefore do a 'no-trump conversion' where you draw trumps till no-one has any left and then play the hand in no-trumps with the three remaining suits. It's probably as good as any other method as the contract will be a struggle.

Until a student has mastered drawing trumps and fully understands why ruffing in the long hand isn't productive, they won't benefit from further lessons on declarer play in suit contracts. However, you can't hold back the class so you must move on. One solution might be to suggest that students use the trump counter until they clearly don't need it any more. However, some feel stigmatised and reject the idea. Sometimes 'face saving' can impede learning but an unhappy student won't learn much.

My dream would be to have a beginner's class where everyone draws trumps ASAP unless they had a valid reason. Sadly for me, this remains a dream, but my eight little trump counters have helped hundreds of students over the years. Give them a try at your beginner's class; you must know someone with DIY skills who would enjoy the challenge of making them. ■

Answers to Bernard Magee's Bidding Quizzes 4-6 on the Cover and page 7

4. Dealer East. Love All.

♠ A 8 7 6 5	♠ 9
♥ 9 3	♥ A K 8 6 4
♦ K Q 8 6 2	♦ 4 3
♣ 2	♣ A J 7 6 3



West	North	East	South
1♠	Pass	1♥	Pass
?		2♣	Pass

2♥. Your partner has bid two suits and they misfit with your hand. Once again, you should downgrade your hand. Two-suited hands are wonderful when you have a fit, but when they misfit, you will generally find that declaring contracts can be very difficult. It pays to be careful with misfits and staying low is wise. Here, you should simply revert to your partner's first suit, 2♥, and with a little bit of ruffing in both hands your partner should be able to make. Any higher and you are likely to be recording a minus score.

5. Dealer East. Love All.

♠ K Q J 8 7	♠ A 4 3
♥ A K	♥ J 9 8 7
♦ Q J 6 4 3	♦ K 7 2
♣ 6	♣ A 9 5



West	North	East	South
2♥ ¹	Pass	1NT	Pass
?		2♠	Pass

¹Transfer to spades

3♦. This hand demonstrates the flexibility of transfers: you use your first response to 1NT to show five or more spades and now you can show your second suit at the three level. A rebid of 3♦ shows a strong two-suited hand: your partner has to bid again – either by bidding 3NT or supporting one of your suits. Here, East will bid 3♠ – showing three- or four- card support

– remember that his 2♠ bid did not show spade support, he was simply completing the transfer.

Once you know you have a spade fit, you can try for slam by making a cue bid of 4♣ (first or second-round control) and then when East can bid 4♦ (showing the ♦A or ♦K), you can bid Blackwood. Your partner would show two aces and you would go for the slam: 6♠.

6. Dealer South. Love All.

♠ A K 8 7 6	♠ 4
♥ J 10 9 7 6	♥ K Q 2
♦ A K	♦ 9 8
♣ 2	♣ K J 9 6 5 4 3



West	North	East	South
?			3♦

4♦. Pre-emptive bids are designed to make your life awkward and, once again, they have achieved their aim. You have two suits that you would like to show, but you have to start at the three level rather than the one level. With such potential in a heart or spade contract, it is not unreasonable to hope that your partner will have at least three-card support for one of them. With a fit, your hand will be very powerful (just five losers) so it is just a matter of showing your two suits. A double does not really do the trick because that suggests you have support for all the unbid suits and on this hand you would find your partner responding 5♣. Instead, you should bid 4♦ – the opponents' suit – you clearly do not want to play in diamonds. Instead, this is used to show a strong two suited hand. Your partner bids the lowest suit he would be happy to play with as trumps (opposite a five-card holding in your hand). Here East would bid 4♥ and that is where you would play.

Had you chosen to simply overcall 3♠ hoping to show hearts later you might have finished in 3♠. ■

READERS' LETTERS

IN PRAISE OF...



Jeremy Dhondy, pictured above, is excellent at being able to converse with all, about all and at all levels of the game. His articles are always very informative and worth a read.

Whether he is explaining how to play Lebensohl or identifying the problems of the shrinking numbers of those playing club bridge or defending the virtues of the EBU, he is always interesting.

He listed the ten commandments to help clubs prevent slow play, see BRIDGE 175.

I would like to suggest that Jeremy add one more commandment, which I think will go a long way to solving the perennial problem of slow play:

'The director should call the move for the next round even when up to a third of tables are still playing.'

**John Williams,
Montrose Bridge Club.**

IRISH GOODWILL

Thank you for the wonderful bridge cruise we had in June on board Magellan to Iceland. The ship, its Captain and crew, were first class. We particularly wish to praise your bridge team:

Gwen, Ingrid and Kay. They worked tirelessly to provide all the bridge anyone could want. We were impressed by the atmosphere of great good humour and civility throughout – combined with proper formality and competitive spirit.

Gwen's tutorials were gems: fun, thought provoking and challenging us to look at things anew. The graphics, presentation and notes were superb.

This was our first bridge cruise – there certainly will be more.

**Eileen and Cormac Lalor,
Collins Bridge Club,
Cork, Republic of Ireland.**

TRY AGAIN ROGER

Roger Harris should appreciate that partners do not need to 'match' each others' methods in hand evaluation. However, both he and his partner would greatly benefit by extending their range of techniques to include point count, fit, shape, distribution of values etc, in addition to the Losing Trick Count.

Knowing that the Losing Trick Count is so important in such a range, it would be well worth his trying again to persuade his partner to adopt it. He could use, as an example of the effectiveness of the LTC,

hand number 3 of Bernard Magee's bidding quiz in the July issue of BRIDGE (hands reprinted below).

3. Dealer East. Game All.

♠ A 9 7 6	♠ K 3
♥ Void	♥ A 9 8 7 6 5
♦ K 8 4	♦ Q 2
♣ A Q 10 5 4 2	♣ K J 8

East opens 1♥, West bids 2♣ and East responds 3♣ (rather than repeat his threadbare hearts in the first instance).

West has five losers, and can place East with seven losers for his opening bid. On the loser count, West has enough for 6♣ and can bid it directly. In explanation, he can point out to his partner that this hand would be a tricky one to reach slam by other means, particularly as the suit is clubs, and hope that his partner is convinced.

He might also mention that their opponents will be using this excellent tool, and that their partnership is disadvantaged if they do not.

**Ann Stevenson,
Hopton, Stafford.**

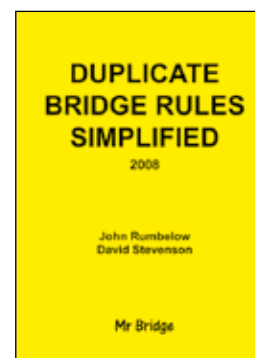
BACK AT WORK

Many thanks for the smart bridge diary that you sent. It is very much appreciated and Thelma has already started to put entries into it.

Recently I exhausted myself, commentating and writing for the daily bulletin during the recent European Open championships. Six hours a day for 14 days... it was like being back at

work and a bit too much at my stage of life. Still, I enjoyed every minute of it.
David Bird by email.

JUST ASKING



- When will the new version of the Yellow Book be available?
- Will BRIDGE have articles by David Stevenson on the law changes?
- Have you considered producing an app on the main laws, for the benefit of club directors?

Dermot Paddon by email.

See my editorial notes on page 5 of this issue.

MARKETING... IT CERTAINLY IS NOT

Just to say how much my mother, Hazel Morgan, enjoyed her holiday in Rovinj, Croatia earlier this year.

She passed away some six weeks after enjoying a fantastic two weeks playing bridge.

I am not saying this should be a selling point, but I would very much like you to put the news of her death in your magazine. This will ensure that those she met on her oh so recent holiday will remember her.

Jill Morgan by email.

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Answers to Bernard Magee's Bidding Quizzes 7-9 on the Cover and page 7

7. Dealer West. Love All.

♠ 3 ♠ 8 7 6
♥ AKQ32 ♥ J1054
♦ AJ542 ♦ 8
♣ 75 ♣ A9863

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2♥	3♠
?			

4♦.

You have a fit in hearts so you can fully evaluate your hand: 14 HCP, two five-card suits and a singleton – worth perhaps 18 or 19 total points. Use the losing trick count and you will count only five losers. Both methods tell you to bid on, but before you simply bid 4♥ consider what is likely to happen next. Over 4♥, North bids 4♠ and your partnership now has a decision to make – should you bid on to 5♥ or not?

Generally, the answer is no, unless you have a double fit: 8+ cards between the partnership in two different suits: you clearly have plenty of hearts, but what about diamonds?

By showing your second suit by bidding 4♦ (on the way to 4♥), you help your partner to decide what to do over 4♠. With five diamonds and a singleton club, he would bid 5♥, but here, with five clubs and a singleton diamond, he will double.

A diamond lead will likely lead to a two trick defeat of 4♠, whilst a trump lead against 5♥ would make it very difficult to make ten tricks, let alone eleven.

8. Dealer East. E/W Game.

♠ 732 ♠ 6
♥ AK843 ♥ QJ65
♦ 52 ♦ A87
♣ KJ4 ♣ AQ732

West	North	East	South
		1♣	1♠
2♥	3♠	4♥	4♠
?			

5♣.

Your side have the majority of strength, so you cannot sell out to 4♠ without doubling: between you, you have to decide whether to bid on or double 4♠.

It is dangerous to progress to the five-level unless you have a double fit. However, your partner has already shown you his first suit: clubs, and you do have a reasonable fit with this suit. Expecting him to have five clubs and at least three hearts, you do indeed have a double fit and can bid on above 4♠. Why not tell him of your fit in clubs at the same time by bidding 5♣ – this is not suggesting that you play in clubs, but that you have a double fit and thus the potential for more tricks.

Perhaps it is unrealistic to bid on to 6♥ with these two hands (combined 24 points), but twelve tricks will be easy. 5♣ allows your partner to cue bid 5♦ (cue bids above 4NT should show first round controls). Now you might see the full potential of the two hands – the hope that your second diamond might be discarded, leaving just a spade loser.

9. Dealer North. N/S Game.

♠ A76 ♠ KQJ54
♥ J10987 ♥ Void
♦ 43 ♦ J962
♣ 652 ♣ A943

West	North	East	South
	1♥	1♠	2♥
?			

Pass.

Your partner overcalls 1♠, showing five cards and you hold three spades, which means you have a fit.

Even with just five high card points, you should contemplate raising to 2♠ – the level of your fit.

However, consider the danger of bidding 2♠ – you show your partner that you have a fit and since you are so weak it would be no surprise if North now raises in hearts, perhaps even to 4♥.

What will your partner be thinking?

He holds a very distributional hand and will be thinking that 4♥ will probably make, so why not bid 4♠ as a sacrifice. He is not going to expect you to hold two certain trump tricks. He guesses that you might have four hearts, but not such a powerful five-card holding.

Considering the vulnerability and your powerful heart holding, you should keep quiet.

North will probably raise to 4♥ (or invite game).

Over 4♥ you might risk a double, or if you prefer, you can pass. ■

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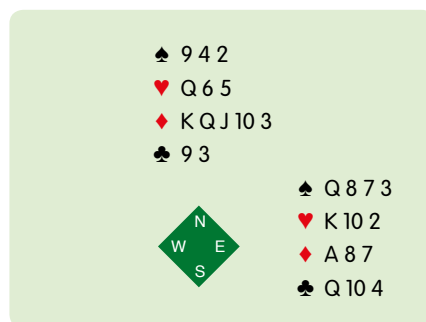
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More Tips from Bernard Magee

When Holding Up Look For Partner's Count Signal

When you hold an ace, as a defender, you have control over the suit – by choosing the right time to play your master you will sometimes be able to break declarer's communications and save a number of tricks. However, to know when to play your ace is not easy – for this you will often need assistance from your partner. Hopefully, your partner will give you a count signal – telling you how many cards he has in the suit. When following to declarer's lead (from hand or dummy) defenders generally give a count signal: playing low with an odd number of cards; or playing a higher spot card to suggest an even number.

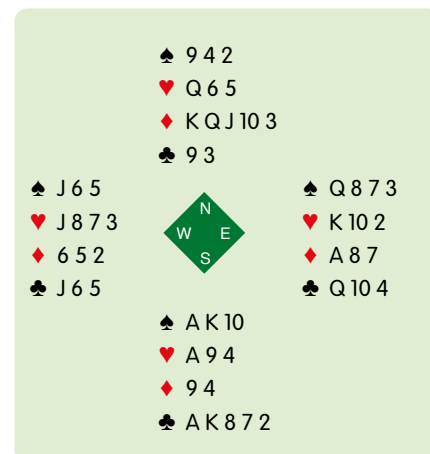
follows to declarer's lead with his lowest card, he is showing an odd number of cards. Now it is arithmetic time. Five in dummy plus three in your hand equals eight, leaving five out. Your partner has an odd number, probably three, which leaves declarer with a doubleton. Your job is to take your ace on the round that takes declarer's last card – here it will be the second round.



West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	Pass	1♣
Pass	3NT	All Pass	2NT

You are sitting East and your partner leads the ♥3 against 3NT. Dummy plays the ♥5 and you choose the ♥10 which declarer takes with his ace. He then plays the ♦9, to West's ♦2 and dummy's ♦3.

This is crunch time – you need to decide when to take your ace – your aim is to cut declarer off from the lovely diamonds in dummy. Your partner's ♦2 carries an important message – when he



After you win the second diamond you return a spade – you need your ♥K to retain its place over dummy's ♥Q. Declarer wins the switch and might try ducking a club or simply lead a heart to the queen. Neither tactic will work here: declarer cannot establish more than eight tricks if you keep him to just one diamond. Clearly, if East ducks a second round of diamonds, then declarer has his ninth trick.

Most defenders know that they are supposed to duck with an ace some of the time, but they tend to guess on which round to play it. If you look out for a count signal from your partner, then you will be able to work out exactly when to play it.

Answers to Bernard Magee's Bidding Quizzes 10-12 on the Cover and page 7

10. Dealer West. Love All.

♠ 7 6	♠ A 8 2
♥ K Q 8 7 6	♥ 9
♦ A K 8 3 2	♦ 9 6 5
♣ 2	♣ A Q J 10 4 3



West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2♣	2♣
?			

Pass. You have a lovely two-suited hand and hope to open 1♥ and rebid 2♦ to describe your hand neatly. However, your opponents have other ideas and take the auction up to 2♣ before you can bid again.

It is tempting to bid 3♦, but you would be taking the auction to a dangerous level on a minimum hand with no fit found. All will be well if you find a fit, otherwise you will be committed to game with too few points. Here, East would bid 3NT over 3♦, hoping his spade stop would be good enough. Clearly, you would be overboard and defeated soundly.

Instead West should pass and leave things up to his partner – he may well bid again – either doubling for take-out or rebidding a very strong suit. Here, East would rebid 3♣ and that should end the auction.

11. Dealer West. N/S Game.

♠ Void	♠ 9 8 7 6
♥ K Q 8 7 6	♥ 9 2
♦ Q J 4	♦ A K
♣ A Q 8 7 6	♣ K J 10 3 2



West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2♣	2♣
?			

4♣. This time you have found a lovely fit, you opened 1♥ and your partner has responded 2♣. Normally you are not so keen on minor suit fits, but with five-card support and a void, you have

to be excited. Just a four loser hand or probably worth 20 total points if you assess your void and long suits.

5♣ should be the least of your ambitions and you want to get across your excitement to your partner. 3♠: a bid of the opponents' suit would show excitement, but perhaps better is to jump in their suit. 4♣ would suggest great excitement and that slam might be on. To be that excited, usually it will show a void in the suit.

With nothing wasted in spades and holding the ♦A-K in the only unbid suit, East is clearly worth a move towards slam. It is never easy to bid minor suit slams particularly when there is interference, but 6♣ is certainly a great contract.

12. Dealer East. Love All.

♠ A 9 8 7 6 5	♠ 2
♥ 7	♥ A K 8 6 4 2
♦ Void	♦ 9 8 6 5
♣ Q 9 8 7 6 5	♣ A 2



West	North	East	South
1♠	2♦	1♥	Dbl
?		2♥	3♦

Pass. Wow! You have some hand – 6-6 hands are uncommon and you would love to get to play the hand, but as usual you need some kind of fit to justify further bidding. Surely with two six-card suits you are bound to have a fit. That is a reasonable assumption, but your opponents have pushed the level up to 3♦ and to show your second suit would mean bidding 4♣, which is much too high. Rebidding 3♠ is no good either, because now you would be hoping that your partner has something friendly in spades. Unfortunately, you just have to pass and wait for your next big two-suiter to come along...

You might defeat 3♦ if you can give your partner a spade ruff, whilst any contract by your side is going to struggle. ■

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Ten Days

by Sally Brock

*Sally is the captain of the English U26 women's team.
The team is playing in the European Youth Championships in Slovakia.*

Friday

My main job of the morning is to pack. I not only have to pack for my trip to Slovakia, but when I get back I have only a day to get ready for Toronto and certainly won't have time to do any laundry, so the packing for both trips has to be considered together. An old schoolfriend comes over for lunch which is nice – an opportunity to show off my new flat. I leave when she does at about 2.30pm, and head off to meet up with son Ben who is driving home from work. This requires me to get the overground to Hampstead Heath and walk for five minutes or so – I'm finding it so easy to get around. The journey back to his place in Newport (near Saffron Walden) takes a lot longer than usual (Friday evening rush hour starts at about lunchtime), but we finally get back to his place and I see my grandchildren – Hayden will be eight soon and Parker is 15 months. Ben cooks a barbecue, and I play with the children. I have great fun with Parker – my daughter-in-law sent me a short video clip of him just walking, taking a few steps, chuckling all the time, before finally falling back on to his bottom. I show him the clip and he loves it. I show it to him again, and he loves it even more. He soon works out how to press the little arrow and play it again and again. Such fun.

Saturday

The alarm is set for six, and after breakfast we set off for the 20-minute or so ride to Stansted. Hayden comes too but I don't think it is as interesting for him as he thought it would be. I don't see any other bridge players

at Stansted or on the flight, but meet up with people when we get to Bratislava. The shuttle bus takes us to our hotel, in Samorin. It is a very nice large sports complex that has three hotels on its campus. The rooms are lovely – spacious with masses of storage. It is mostly organised into two-bedroom suites with a shared bathroom. I am sharing with Bryony Youngs, the coach both for our team and the U21 team. We arrive in time for lunch – cafeteria-style but pretty good nevertheless. There is quite a lot of hanging around until the rooms are allocated, but in that period the rest of the team – who have flown into Vienna – turn up. At 4pm we have a meeting with our team where I give them lots of advice on how to cope with the week's bridge, and then at 5.30pm there is a captains' meeting which Bryony and I attend and learn some of the administrative details of this particular event. At 7pm there is an informal opening ceremony at the running track. Then another cafeteria-style dinner.

Sunday – Friday

I have made rather a silly mistake. When asked about what period I was going to write about for this month's article, it seemed to me that I should write up this week where I am captaining the U26 women's team. However, I have now realised that actually every day for six days will effectively be identical. So I have decided to condense the next six days into one time period to try to give you a flavour of what it is like to be here without boring you rigid.

Every morning I set my alarm

for 8.30am, do my exercises, get myself ready and down to breakfast at 9.15am. As I have said before, the food here is very good, with plenty of choice, though it is a bit pot luck what is actually available when you get to the head of the queue. Sometimes, all the cooked stuff has gone but I am happy with cold meats and cheese. English teabags are pretty hard to come by. At 10am the bridge starts. I settle my players – I don't really need to do this, but it makes me feel a bit more useful and the one time I don't, we have our biggest loss! Then I sit with some of the other English people who aren't actually playing. I half keep in touch with what is happening on my laptop and half do some rather tedious work on my computer. The allowed time for each match is two hours and then we score up and decide who is going to play next. Then I go and put the line-up in (ie tell a computer in which seats my players are going to sit). When both captains have done this, we can see what the other has chosen and know which of our pairs is going to play which of theirs). I also scan my badge so I can get a print-out of the scores in the last match, and pick up a copy of the hand records. And so it continues.

We have a longer break for lunch after two matches but otherwise the cycle continues all day, and then we have supper. After supper, I am usually part of the group who heads off to the bar for a couple of glasses of wine before retiring to my room.

Let me introduce you to my team:

My Team

My star pair is Yvonne and Alex. Yvonne would have been on the U26 open team were it not for the fact that

her partner decided to give up the game entirely a few months before the event. She has played a lot for Scotland in grown-up women's events and now lives in Stockholm with her partner Adam. She works in a laboratory as an environmental chemist. Alex, who lives in Crawley with her boyfriend Will, is a senior products manager for a mail order gift company.

Then we have Siyu (or Helen) and Ewa. They have just finished their first year at Oxford University. Siyu, who now tells me she would prefer to be called Helen, is Chinese and is studying engineering science. Ewa is Polish and studying biochemistry.

The third pair is Olivia (Liv) and Hanna. Liv has just finished her geography degree at Bristol and has now gone home to live in Edinburgh. She is going to spend a year training a guide dog for the blind before going travelling. Hanna is Estonian and has just finished her second year at Nottingham University studying maths.

Then there is Bryony, who is coach both to our team and the U21s. She does all the work that is involved in looking after both teams. Apart from deciding who is to play and putting in the line-up, there is not that much for me to do, except perhaps to keep everyone's spirits up when things are going badly. Before the championships began, I was worried about the girls losing energy towards the end of the set and have provided all of them with small Tupperwares full of nuts, seeds and chocolate. They have instructions to have a snack when there are just four boards to go. Let's hope that helps a bit!

Over the six days that I am writing about, we have good moments (at the end of the first day when we had won all four matches and were challenging for the lead) and bad moments (the end of day two when we had lost all our matches and were not much above average). Another good moment is when we play Poland on the last match of day five and are on BBO. Yvonne and Alex had played on BBO before, but it is the first for Helen and Ewa and they are quite nervous. However, they acquit themselves admirably and we win the match and move up into the bronze medal position.

Interesting Hands

You hear the following bidding sequence:

West	North	East	South
1♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♦	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♦	Pass
4♥	Pass	6♥	Pass
6NT	Pass	Pass	Dbl
All Pass			

What do you lead as North?

Dealer West. Love All.

♠ 10 8 4 3 2
♥ J 8
♦ 10 8
♣ Q J 8 2

Our North chooses a diamond, and is rather alarmed to find that eight of them come down in the dummy! The full deal:

♠ K Q J 9	♠ 10 8 4 3 2	♠ 7
♥ A 9 2	♥ J 8	♥ K 10 6
♦ K J	♦ 10 8	♦ A Q 9 7 6 4 3 2
♣ 10 9 5 4	♣ Q J 8 2	♣ 7
	♠ A 6 5	
	♥ Q 7 5 4 3	
	♦ 5	
	♣ A K 6 3	

As it happens, South has enough discards, and just needs to come down to the two black aces and ♥Q-7-5 (actually coming down to a singleton small club would be better but a little scary). In the end, declarer drops a trick and the slam goes two down for +300, which goes well with the +430 in the other room. Note that our pair are not in the right contract either. The bidding goes:

West	North	East	South
1♣	Pass	1♦	1♥
Pass	Pass	3♥	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

East's 3♥ asks partner to bid 3NT with a heart stopper, which she duly does. Unfortunately, there is another suit less well stopped.

Never mind, North leads a heart and the hand is over.

This is a tricky slam deal:

Dealer South. Game All.

♠ 10 4 2	♠ 9 8
♥ A K 10 4 2	♥ Q J 8 7
♦ K Q 5	♦ 9 8 6 4 3 2
♣ K 2	♣ 5
♠ 7 6 5	♠ A K Q J 3
♥ 6 5 3	♥ 9
♦ A J 10	♦ 7
♣ Q 8 6 3	♣ A J 10 9 7 4

Our opponents bid to 6♠, which looks a little problematical, until you realise that there is no problem unless West leads the ace of diamonds, and if she does, there are three parking places for clubs and only one needs ruffing. Provided declarer draws two rounds of trumps that should be no problem.

Our pair have a slight misunderstanding and opt for 6NT instead, and that is unmakeable, even if declarer guesses clubs correctly (as long as West doesn't fly in with the ♦A).

This deal is well defended by Yvonne:

Dealer South. Game All.

♠ 10 2	♠ A 7
♥ 9 6 5	♥ A 10 3 2
♦ 4 3	♦ J 8 7 6
♣ A Q 10 9 5 3	♣ J 8 4
♠ Q J 8 6 5 4	♠ K 9 3
♥ 8 7 4	♥ K Q J
♦ 9 2	♦ A K Q 10 5
♣ K 6	♣ 7 2

West	North	East	South
2♠	Pass	Pass	2NT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

West, Yvonne, leads the ♠Q to the ace, and a spade is returned, won by declarer's king. Declarer now plays a low club and Yvonne makes the expert play of inserting the ♣K. It is easy to see why this is the right play in textbooks, but not so easy to find it at the table. However even so, declarer has to work hard to find a losing line. She wins the ace (or Yvonne would have had a lot of spades to cash), plays a diamond to her ace and another club, hoping the suit will come in. When West plays low, she wins the ♣Q and plays a heart. Alex ducks and declarer plays another heart. Alex wins and returns a third round of the suit and declarer is sunk. She has to lose a trick in each suit plus a long heart.

So at the end of the six days, with three matches to go, we are lying fourth. We are 5 VPs behind third, 10 VPs ahead of fifth and a massive 43 ahead of seventh, with six to qualify. In our first match tomorrow we play Hungary, who are currently in the bronze medal position. Then we have two middle-of-the-table teams to finish with. We have our eyes firmly on the bronze medal.

The other English teams are in with a good chance of a medal.

The U26 team is lying fifth, 22 points behind third and 17 ahead of seventh. They have the teams lying second, third and bottom to play.

The U21 team had been leading for quite a while, but have not had a good day. Still, they are lying fourth, but only 5 VPs off the lead and 27 VPs ahead of seventh. However, they have a very tough finish with first, second, sixth and eighth placed teams still to play.

Everything is balanced on a knife edge and tomorrow will be a very exciting day.

Saturday

The first match against third-placed Hungary is tremendous. Everyone who isn't playing is keenly watching on their laptops in the bar. We are all willing our team to do the right thing. Helen and Ewa have a great set. We are all on the edge of our seats for Board 11 in particular:

Dealer South. Love All.

♠ 10 9 ♥ Q J 8 5 4 ♦ A 7 ♣ K J 5 3	♠ A 8 6 ♥ K 7 3 ♦ K Q 9 8 4 2 ♣ 4	♠ Q J 5 2 ♥ A 9 2 ♦ 10 5 ♣ Q 9 6 2
---	--	---

♠ K 7 4 3 ♥ 10 6 ♦ J 6 3 ♣ A 10 8 7			
--	--	--	--

Our Closed Room result is good in a small way. Yvonne makes 4♦ when East underleads the ♥A at trick one.

However, this is the Open Room auction:

West	North	East	South
			Pass
Pass	1♦	Pass	1♠
Dbl	Rdbl	2♣	Pass
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♥
Dbl	3NT	Dbl	Pass
Pass	4♠	Dbl	All Pass

The defence start with two rounds of hearts, and then West switches to the ♠10, won in hand by declarer who knocks out the ♦A. West wins the second diamond and switches to a club to the queen and ace.

Declarer can probably get out for two or three down now, but she plays a diamond next, ruffed by West. She plays a third round of hearts. Declarer ruffs and plays a spade to the ace. Now when she plays a diamond East ruffs, draws the last trumps and claims the rest, +1,100.

When the dust clears we win by 29 IMPs, but both sides are fined 1 VP as a time penalty. As I write, they have just started the penultimate match against the Czech Republic and we are in the bronze medal position, 9 VPs ahead of Hungary who are now fourth.

Nightmare. After a couple of small partscore swings, it all goes wrong and after eight boards we are 26 IMPs down. It is with great relief that we gain 13 IMPs on each of two back-to-back boards towards the end, and the final result is a loss by 1 IMP.

In the meantime, Hungary have

been hammered by the Netherlands while France beat Germany heavily. So now the threat is France, not Hungary. However, we have an 11 VP lead over France, so as long as we can score 9 VPs we are guaranteed the bronze medal. Meanwhile the Netherlands have an 8 VP lead over Poland at the top and they are playing each other. It will be good to watch.

In the meantime, our U21 team are hanging on in there. With two matches to go (they have a slightly different schedule with five shorter matches a day compared with our four) they are in third place, 6 VPs off the lead and 12 ahead of fourth. On the other hand, the U26 team's tournament is effectively done and dusted as they are lying fifth, out of reach both of third and seventh and they eventually finish in sixth place.

In the end we do OK against Turkey but France do badly, so in fact we don't need any victory points at all. There is also no change in the U21 event. All in all, it has been a great English performance. It is the first time we have won any medals in any European junior events since we played as Great Britain (in about 2000, I believe). We are the only country with all four teams qualifying for the world championships. China here we come!

After a couple of glasses of prosecco, there is a closing ceremony where we are presented with our medals. Then dinner, followed by even more glasses of prosecco/red wine, and a not-too-late, not-too-drunken night. All feeling pretty pleased with ourselves.

Sunday

We need to check out of our rooms by 11am, and rather than wait there until four o'clock for the shuttle bus to the airport, a group of us decide to get a taxi to Bratislava station, leave our baggage in left luggage and spend a few hours in town before flying home. This all goes according to plan. We walk around Bratislava Castle, then the Old Town, before stopping for a pleasant lunch in the sunshine. Back to the station and then an Uber to the airport for an uneventful flight home. ■

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