



Overcall with a Good Suit

The primary objectives for suit overcalls are:

- 1 to direct the opening lead;
- 2 to suggest a sacrifice;
- 3 to crowd the opponents' bidding, ideally to push them too high;
- 4 to reach a contract your way.

The range for a suit overcall at the one level is extensive and you should count points for high cards and distribution. Any six-card suit is suitable; with five cards, suit quality is more important than strength elsewhere in the hand.

Hand 1	Hand 2
♠ K J 9 8 4	♠ K 7 5 4 2
♥ 6 2	♥ J 6
♦ 5 3	♦ Q J 6
♣ A J 5 3	♣ K J 6

At love all, your right-hand opponent opens 1♣. Hand 1 is worth an overcall of 1♠ but hand 2, with more points, is not. The reason is that (1) has the jack of spades to support the king and good secondary cards in the nine and eight of spades. Also, 5332 hands are not as powerful as 5422, especially if an opponent has bid the four-card suit. With hand 1, your length and the 1♣ opening make it likely partner is short in clubs, increasing the chance of a spade fit.

Vulnerability is an important factor – neither hand would be worth 1♠ if vulnerable. Suit length is also most important. Substitute the jack of hearts in hand 2 for the jack of spades and you can justify a 1♠ overcall, even if vulnerable, because of the six-card suit.

Conscious competence is a valuable attribute when overcalling. The more favourable the vulnerability and the more opposing bidding space you can consume, the greater the case for making an overcall.

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

Hand 3 is a minimum overcall of 1♠ not vulnerable if RHO has opened 1♣ because it stops LHO from responding 1♥. Exchange the eight of spades for the queen and it becomes a sound overcall at any vulnerability.

Hand 4, with the two decent five-card suits, justifies an overcall of 1♠ over 1♦. If you run into a penalty double, you might escape into your second suit.

Two-level overcalls normally require a good six-card suit such as Q-J-9-8-6-4 or better and the values for an opening bid. A very strong five-card suit also qualifies if it obstructs the opponents.

Hand 5	Hand 6
♠ K 5	♠ 7 5 2
♥ 6 2	♥ 6 2
♦ K 4 2	♦ A 7 2
♣ A J 7 6 5 4	♣ A K J 10 6

If RHO opens 1♠, pass with either of these hands if you are vulnerable. If not vulnerable, you can overcall 2♣.

You would need a hand like hand 7 to overcall at unfavourable vulnerability:

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

Here you have a very good suit and six likely tricks in your hand.

In the sandwich seat – when both the opponents are bidding but your partner has passed – the need for a good suit is extra strong. For one thing, there is a reduced chance that your side will buy the contract. This adds to the need to bid a suit you want led. For another, knowing about each other's hands, they are in a good position to penalise you.

Dealer: South. Love All.

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

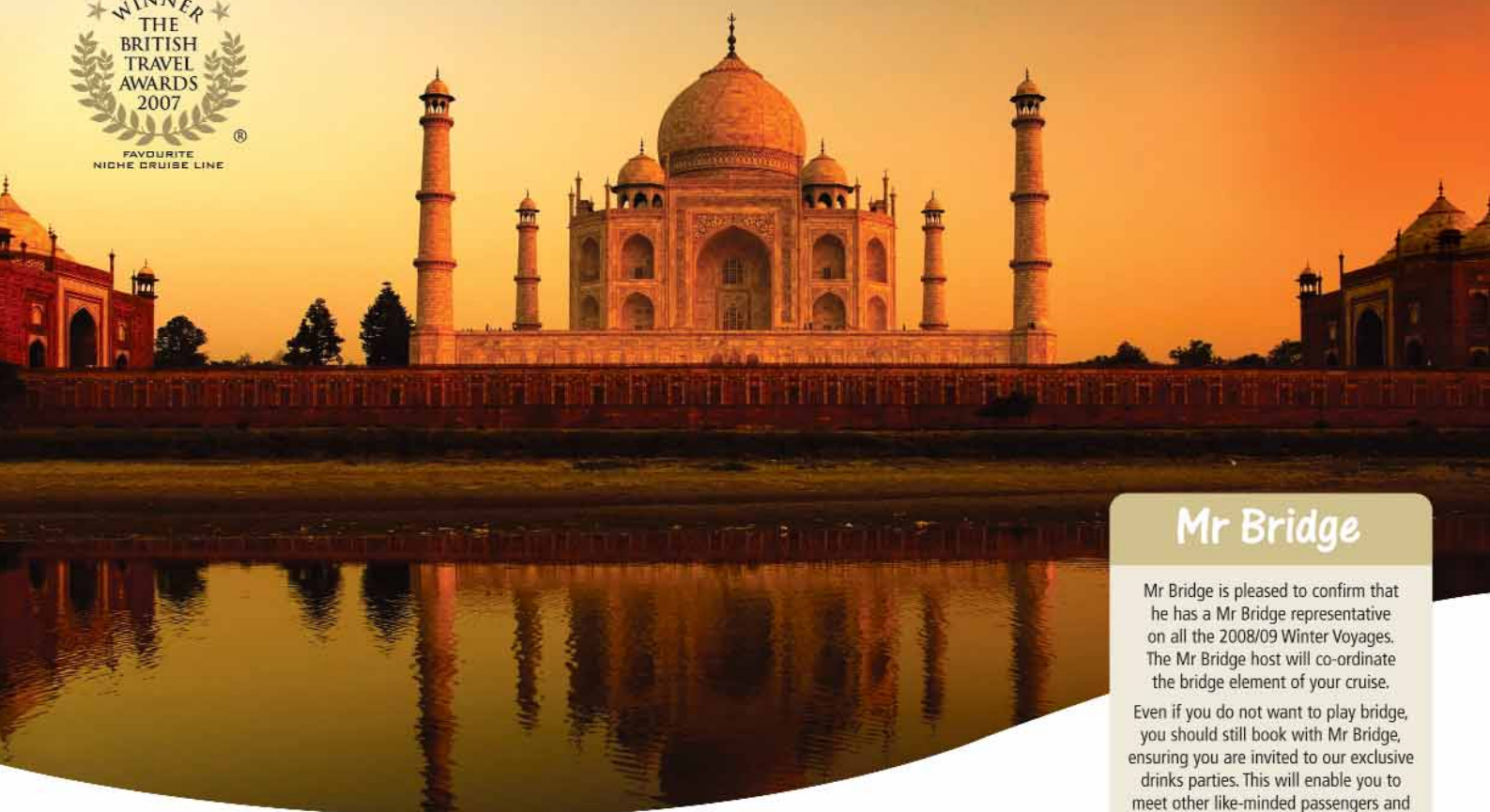
West	North	East	South
			1♣
Pass	1♥	1♠	1NT
Pass	3NT	End	

This was how the bidding went at one table in a Crockford's match. Goaded by the overcall, West led the jack of spades. Declarer won in dummy with the king and later finessed the ten of spades. Eight tricks had become nine.

The overcall was particularly poor, as East has a good holding in the other unbid suit, diamonds.

At the other table, the bidding was the same except East passed over 1♥. After West led the two of diamonds, declarer made only eight tricks.

Now for my hobbyhorse – bidding is more important than play! Even a near beginner would make 3NT on a spade lead but not on any other. ■



Mr Bridge

Mr Bridge is pleased to confirm that he has a Mr Bridge representative on all the 2008/09 Winter Voyages. The Mr Bridge host will co-ordinate the bridge element of your cruise.

Even if you do not want to play bridge, you should still book with Mr Bridge, ensuring you are invited to our exclusive drinks parties. This will enable you to meet other like-minded passengers and feel part of a group. Unless otherwise requested, the bridge group all dine together, making for a friendly atmosphere. The bridge element is fully optional, you may participate as much or as little as you wish.

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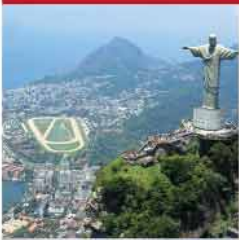
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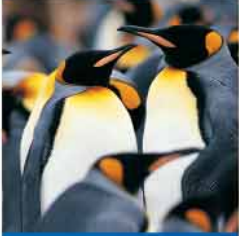
ANTARCTICA & THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

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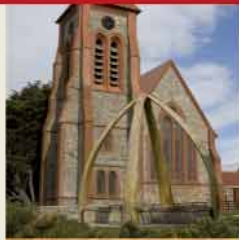
ANTARCTICA & CHILEAN FJORDS I

Departs January 10, 2009 – 21 Days
 → Buenos Aires (2 nights) ~ Ushuaia ~ Deception Island
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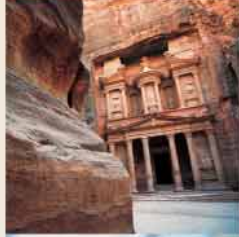
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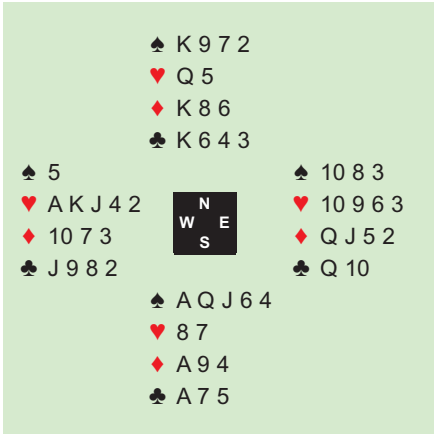
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Don't Give a Ruff and Discard

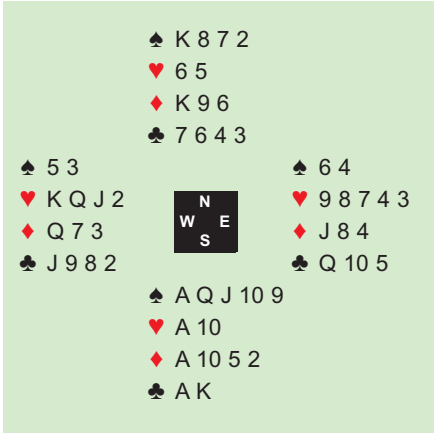
A joy as declarer is ruffing losers in one hand or the other – but you just can't on some deals ...



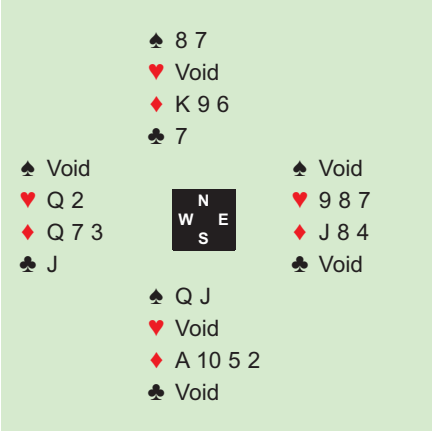
West	North	East	South
Pass	3♣	Pass	1♠
End			4♠

With twenty-six points, you arrive in 4♠ but are sorry to see no way to obtain useful ruffs anywhere. Success appears to hinge on a 3-3 club break, in which case you make five spades, two diamonds and three clubs. A glance at the diagram shows that this wish would not come true – but just imagine that West mistakenly starts with three rounds of hearts. (Maybe West thought that East's three of hearts on the first round showed an odd number, while East just meant it as discouraging. These things happen!) This would be a serious error because declarer could ruff the third heart in dummy while discarding a losing club (or diamond) from hand. Allowing declarer a ruff and discard is a cardinal defensive sin. You should avoid this at all costs – or nearly all costs, as we shall see later.

On the next deal, move to the West seat and see how your refusal to give a ruff and discard will break the contract:



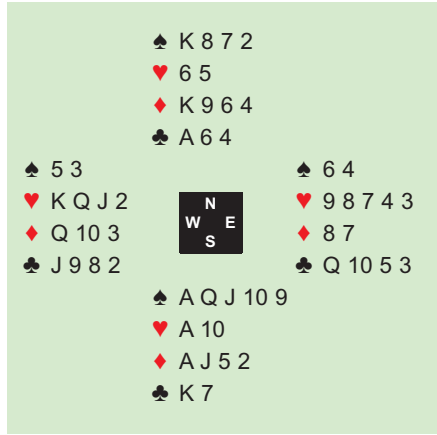
South arrives in 6♣ and you lead the king of hearts. Declarer wins, cashes two top clubs from hand, goes over to dummy with the king of spades and ruffs a club. He then draws the last trumps and exits with the ten of hearts to your jack. These cards remain:



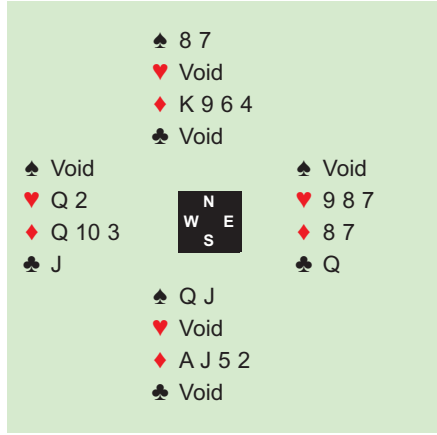
Can you see that, if you led another heart declarer would be able to throw a diamond from dummy whilst ruffing in hand? Then he would have no diamond losers! It would be just as fatal for you to lead a diamond as then declarer could pick up that suit without loss.

The only safe thing is for you to lead your last club. Declarer can ruff in hand but will have a diamond to lose.

Let's change the deal ever so slightly:



The contract and lead are the same. If again declarer wins the opening lead, ruffs a club after drawing trumps and exits with a heart, there is a serious difference. These cards now remain:



You as West are on lead. Here, while a diamond lead would let declarer pick up the suit, a ruff and discard does him no good – with at least three diamonds left in each hand, he will still have a diamond loser! So, it would be equally safe to lead a heart or a club. This is rather an exceptional case, however. The basic principle of never giving a ruff and discard is a sound one. ■

Mr Bridge
AT
BARONY CASTLE
2008



1-3 February
Leads & Defence
Derek Monk

7-9 March
Overcalls
Chris Barrable

24-26 October
Doubles
Derek Monk

7-9 November
Signals & Discards
Chris Barrable



£209
per person
full board

No Single
Supplement

PROGRAMME

This is the format for all duplicate weekends and rarely varies.

FRIDAY

1500 **Mr Bridge**
Welcome Desk open
Afternoon Tea

1745 to 1830
Welcome drinks
reception

1830 to 2000
DINNER

2015 **BRIDGE**
SESSION 1
DUPLICATE PAIRS

SATURDAY

0800 to 0930
BREAKFAST

1000 to 1230
SEMINAR &
SUPERVISED PLAY
of SET HANDS 1
(tea & coffee at 1100)

1230 to 1330
COLD BUFFET
LUNCH

1400 to 1645
BRIDGE
SESSION 2
TEAMS of FOUR

1815 to 2000
DINNER

2015 **BRIDGE**
SESSION 3
DUPLICATE PAIRS

SUNDAY

0800 to 0930
BREAKFAST

1000 to 1230
SEMINAR &
SUPERVISED PLAY
of SET HANDS 2
(tea & coffee at 1100)

1230 to 1400
CARVERY LUNCH

1400 to 1645
BRIDGE
SESSION 4
DUPLICATE PAIRS

Mr Bridge

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Expiry: CVV Issue No.

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Mr Bridge, Ryden Grange, Bisley, Surrey GU21 2TH

☎ 01483 489961 Fax 01483 797302

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Mr Bridge

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BOOKING FORM

Please book me for places,

Single Double Twin

for the Olde Barn weekend(s) of

.....

Mr/Mrs/Miss

Address.....

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Postcode ☎

Special requirements (these cannot be guaranteed, but we will do our best to oblige)

.....

Please give the name(s) of all those covered by this booking

.....

Please send a non-returnable deposit of £50 per person per place by cheque, payable to Mr Bridge. An invoice will be sent with your booking confirmation. On receipt of your final payment, 28 days before the event, a programme and full details will be sent together with a map. Cancellations are not refundable. Should you require insurance, you should contact your own insurance broker.

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e-mail: leanora@mrbridge.co.uk

website: www.holidaybridge.com

PROGRAMME

This is the format for all duplicate weekends and rarely varies.

FRIDAY

- 1500 **Mr Bridge**
Welcome Desk open
Afternoon Tea
- 1745 to 1830
Welcome drinks
reception
- 1830 to 2000
DINNER
- 2015 **BRIDGE**
SESSION 1
DUPLICATE PAIRS

SATURDAY

- 0800 to 0930
BREAKFAST
- 1000 to 1230
SEMINAR &
SUPERVISED PLAY
of SET HANDS 1
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- 1230 to 1330
COLD BUFFET
LUNCH
- 1400 to 1645
BRIDGE
SESSION 2
TEAMS of FOUR
- 1815 to 2000
DINNER
- 2015 **BRIDGE**
SESSION 3
DUPLICATE PAIRS

SUNDAY

- 0800 to 0930
BREAKFAST
- 1000 to 1230
SEMINAR &
SUPERVISED PLAY
of SET HANDS 2
(tea & coffee at 1100)
- 1230 to 1400
CARVERY LUNCH
- 1400 to 1645
BRIDGE
SESSION 4
DUPLICATE PAIRS

Mr Bridge AT THE OLDE BARN



2008

14-16 Mar (£209)
Declarer Play
Bernard Magee

28-30 Mar (£199)
Improvers*
Leads & Defence
Ray Hutchinson

16-18 May (£199)
Overcalls
Alison Nicolson

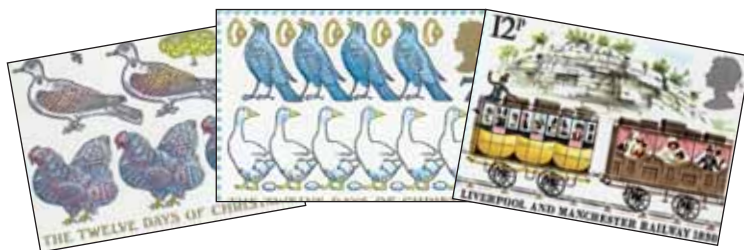
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*Improvers' Weekends are aimed at the novice player and/or those picking up the game after a long break.

READERS' LETTERS



HAPPY READER

Seeing the number 86 on the latest edition prompted me to have a look to see just how long I have happily been receiving your magazine. BRIDGE number 1 was in the summer of 1994 – only 30 pages – but even then it was an interesting read.

We do not play much now but I do enjoy reading about the game. Many things really have not changed over the years. There might be some fancy bidding and a few new ideas at the table, but there are still 13 cards in a suit. Playing 3NT today is much the same now as when I played and taught endless years ago.

Tony North-Graves, Norwich.

WE LOVE YARBOROUGH

Please forward my compliments to Michael Scarratt for his beautifully whimsical Christmas story about the bridge club dogs, Yarborough and Blackwood (BRIDGE 86). Much better than all the Scrooge/humbug type stories printed elsewhere!

I hope Michael will put his stories in a book. I am sure friends who play would be delighted to receive such a light-hearted publication.

Judith Webb, Purbeck U3A 'Bridge for Fun', Dorset.

BRIDGE ONLINE

I am no longer a member of the EBU so would like to play bridge online. I have read in

your magazine that there is bridge online, which is free. Can you please give me details? Thank you so much for your magazine, I really do enjoy it.

Kath Moorhouse, Bingley, Yorks.

The best free site for duplicate bridge is Bridge Base Online, which you can join via www.bridgebase.com. Within Bridge Base, there are a number of groups including a British-based group called 'Acol at BBO'. You can visit this website www.acolatbbo.org.uk but it gives little information for the prospective member. You can at least see the times of their tournaments. In any case, you will need to become a member of BBO before you can join 'Acol at BBO'. See also the following letters.

ACOL AT BBO

Would it be possible for one of your writers (Stephen Cashmore perhaps) to do a feature on online play?

I play regularly on Bridge Base Online, where we have our own Acol Club, and enter free tourneys and attend regular teaching sessions there. We even have our own website acolatbbo.org.uk.

My main problem concerns the different scoring methods. It can be frustrating to play a difficult game contract with care, only to get a bad score, either because others made overtricks or because a misguided

opponent doubled. Tactics are not my strong point.

Tony Hobson ('Old York' on bbo), York.

BRIDGE BASE

In a recent issue, Sally Brock recommended www.bridgebase.com for weaker players as one of the best means of improving one's play. It certainly seems to be an extremely versatile and comprehensive site but my wife and I are somewhat dismayed that the bidding sections it has seem to cover only SAYC and not Acol.

Your December issue points out that it has its own group of Acol players, but so far we have not found any lessons, etc that cover Acol. Have we missed something? **Terry Arthur, Stamford, Lincs.** Yes, you need to join the Acol group 'acolatbbo' – see also the previous letter.

CLUB MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

I am the financial auditor and a member of Wetherby Bridge Club. We still prepare the accounts by hand. I was wondering whether, from your experience, you could suggest a computerised accounting package, including membership details, which we could look at and possibly use in the future. We have approximately 250 members. As a matter of interest, I have e-mailed the EBU on this subject on two or three

occasions and not even received the courtesy of an acknowledgement.

Eryl Edwards, Wetherby, West Yorks.

What can readers recommend?

THANKS BERNARD

I have written to you once already about how good *More Acol Bidding* is.

The main thing I would now like to say is that I find I am making unusual bids when other people do not seem to think of them. The reason for this is completely due to Bernard Magee's teaching in *More Acol Bidding*. He has given me so many ideas I cannot thank him enough. Another point is my play has improved so much – thanks again, Bernard.

Sheila Gillan, Thornton Cleveleys, Lancs.

DECLARER PLAY

I was very impressed with Bernard's latest Bridge Program, *Declarer Play*.

Although I teach bridge, I do not play very often, and my card play is getting 'rusty'. I am sure that the time that I spent familiarising myself with the program had an immediate effect. I managed to achieve scores of 71% and 63% with different partners in the evening events immediately after my practise sessions!

Tony Butcher, Crowthorne, Berks. ▶

READERS' LETTERS *continued*

BEGINNERS PLEASE

I have never played bridge but would like to learn how to. Do you run beginners' courses?

Mr A H L Anderson,

Abergavenny, Gwent.

Yes, the first is over the long Easter Holiday weekend this year – see my editorial.

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE?

I am part of a small social group of older folk who get together to play bridge. We are conscious that we are playing at quite a low level, but have no wish to join a club. How can we improve our play?

We read your magazine and are baffled and astonished in equal proportions. We read about TDs and their problems and are amazed. Mind you, we do all like the magazine, even though we do not understand some of it.

Our problem is that no two books seem to say the same thing – about opening points, responses etc. In addition, what are the different levels of conventions? Is there some basic level that we can all use and understand?

So how can we improve? What would you – or your readers – recommend? There must be other friendly little groups like us, who play grimly in two diamonds and make a surprising three overtricks.

Ivor Williams,

Okehampton, Devon.

*You may find the *Mr Bridge 2008 Bridge Players Diary* useful as it includes an Acol summary by Ron Klinger and a summary of the Laws and Ethics. In addition, it contains scoring tables for duplicate and rubber.*

EIGHT DEALS, FOUR RUBBERS

Mr D Solomons asks if anyone can better a sequence of five contracts in a row of three no-trumps bid and made. No, if he means by one declarer but, if by one partnership, yes.

My wife and I, while playing social bridge against another couple, once bid and made 3NT on six consecutive deals. We made 4♠ on the seventh deal and 3NT again on the eighth, making four 700 point rubbers in eight deals.

There was nothing knowingly odd about the shuffling or the dealing. We kept on getting about 26 points between us and most of our auctions consisted of just two bids. I kept the score cards for a number of years but nobody was interested, so they went in the bin. Shortly after this, the other husband gave up the game.

John Hinde, Esher, Surrey.

WHO SCORES HONOURS?

I wonder if you could clear up something for me. At a bridge drive yesterday, one of our four stated that any player could claim honours – declarer, dummy or either of the defenders. I had always believed that to claim points for honours the hand holding them had to be on the declaring side.

Kate Leonard, by email.

Your colleague was right. In a trump contract, when honour cards are the five top trumps – A-K-Q-J-10 – you score 100 points above the line for holding four of these cards and 150 for all five. At no-trumps, the honours are the four aces and, if you hold all four, you score 150. Any

player can score the bonus. It does not matter whether it is declarer, dummy or defender – but the cards must be held in one hand. Normally you score honours only in rubber bridge and not at duplicate.

BENEFITS OF RUBBER

I could hardly agree more with Norman Hart (Issue 86) on the need to revive rubber bridge, but for different reasons. I do not think his suggestion of established bridge clubs in dedicated buildings is necessarily practical – the finance involved, the fact that many older people do not drive any more etc. Still, rubber bridge is probably the ideal transition from bridge lessons to club playing. The pace is slower than duplicate, and you can concentrate on the cards instead of trying to work out how to fill in the initially confusing paperwork and wondering what an arrow switch might be. It is also less pressurised.

My own club positively encourages newer players with one afternoon of rubber bridge and a second afternoon for supervised play. These give newer players the opportunity to find their feet without having the sky fall on their heads.

So take positive action and give more power to rubber bridge. Either you prefer it, as Norman Hart does, or you enjoy it as I do and would like to stay with it for a bit before moving on to duplicate. It is not about money, Norman. I am currently 7p ahead of an old adversary... and that is real fun!

Stella Burnett, by email.

A REAL COMMUNITY

Just a note to tell you that through the good offices of your magazine my BBC

Bridge Companion (letters, BRIDGE 86) is wending its way to a lady in Scotland. She tells me that she will use it to help teach her small bridge class at the local college.

I have had subsequent calls and even one from an old friend who wanted to say hello and that he was sorry that I was not playing any more.

Therefore, I am very grateful to you and the bridge players who are clearly all benefiting from your publication.

Louis Kramer,

Preston, Lancs.

GRAND SLAM

I have a more remarkable story to tell from my 68 years experience of the game than Sam Goldman of Leeds told in Bridge 85.

Back in probably the 1960s, my husband Lawrence and I were just playing rubber bridge with our neighbours Phil and Pearl Duncan (now running a small club in Cardiff). Pearl went white after a deal during the evening (not with new cards) and we gathered that she had a super hand so we advised her to bid as normal. She bid 7NT.

Her hand had 37 points and the four-card suit was spades! What is more, to add insult to injury, Phil had the remaining three jacks! Top that one!

Janet Miller, by e-mail.

DICTATORS

I personally feel that the endless EBU discussion is pointless. At the end of the day the EBU will do whatever they want to. They are in a different world, they appear to have no idea how a normal, average bridge club really works.

John Riddleston,

Witnam, Essex.

READERS' LETTERS

continued

RADIO FOUR

The articles in the Christmas edition of BRIDGE certainly stirred up the media with coverage in the *Daily Telegraph*, later picked up by the BBC Today programme. Well done!

May I make three further observations?

- 1 Rubber v duplicate. By definition, duplicate does require a club in order to play. You can play rubber with as few as four players for whatever stakes they agree, any time, any place. That is not to say either is the superior form.
- 2 Regarding 'personal grooming' (EBU description, not mine!): surely a simple 'dress code applies' notice at clubs and competitions is all that you need.
- 3 My observation (and some years ago Tony Forrester agreed with me) is that the higher the level of competition the worse are the table manners, pettiness and calling for the director. Furthermore, the complaints of aggressiveness, particularly towards newer devotees, one sees more in EBU clubs where the masterpoint rules supreme, as established players like to assert themselves.

Bridge (like golf!) is a game we should play for enjoyment not punishment.

Chris Dicker, Tavistock, Devon.

COMING SOON

Duplicate Bridge Rules Simplified. Is the up-date ready yet?

Mr D Grammer, London N21.
It will be published in July. ▶

SHORT AND TO THE POINT

Please publish some inexpensive puzzle books.
Mrs Plumridge, London W6.

I would like to see the return of Dick Atkinson's Baron.
Mr J A Hall, Cranleigh, Nr Guilford, Surrey.

Who else will fight the EBU menace? **Valerie Austin, Haywards Heath.**

The EBU should not implement their proposals as they may close many small Bridge clubs. **Joan Coombes, Swanland, East Yorks.**

The EBU only want 'constructive ideas'. Those which match their proposals.
Ivor Moore, Plymouth.

Perhaps Bridge is declining because of all the rules.
Mrs Jessie Woodhouse, West Bridgeford.

The drawback with modern bridge is the overwhelming burden of alerts etc. **Mrs M Willis, Stonehouse, Glos.**

I am pleased to see your magazine had been recognised in the national press. **Mrs J G Griffith, Hazel Grove, Cheshire.**

Good to see a weekend in Scotland! **Kirsteen Stewart, Auchencairn, Dalbeattie.**

Can we have less of the EBU rules rhetoric. **Michael Chapleo, Aberdeen.**

A great treat every two months. **Mr D Mumford, York.**

I miss the *The Baron*.
Mr D Monteith, Suffolk.

The two new quizzes are a very good idea. **Mr A Grugan, Weybridge, Surrey.**

I really love the cover of your Christmas issue. **Anne Daly, Co Tyrone, Northern Ireland.**

Occasionally could you recognise that there is a whole world out there that plays 5-card majors. **Mr M Jones, Canterbury.**

Thank you. I could never repay you for your kindness, so I'm asking God to. **Anon.**

Any chance of a weekend venue in the North?
Mrs A Best, Northallerton.

What a splendid cartoonist Marguerite Lihou is – a genius. **Dr J Turner, Colliers Wood, London.**

More Mac-friendly software would be very welcome.
Ann Franklin, Rugby.

Who needs the EBU when you have Mr Bridge?
Mr G Simpson, Stratford-upon-Avon.

Why not place BRIDGE in the waiting rooms of your local dentist and GP's surgery?
Mr K Nuttall, Fishguard.

Always very instructive. Keep it coming! **Mr J Chandler, Hazlemere, Bucks.**

You make the EBU think hard about its role. **Richard Bardsley, Matlock, Derby.**

We in North Yorkshire would welcome courses nearer to home. **Mrs C Phillips, Northallerton, Yorkshire.**

I am so pleased you have a new venue in Cheshire.
Janis Forrest, Fleetwood.

Looking forward to all of next year's issues already!
Joan Kelly, London NW11.

You have replaced the EBU as a conduit for information.
Mr J Turner, Gloucester.

Some of your letters are quite unbelievably rude.
Mr S Fletcher, Stockport.

I am very much a beginner at this game, although aged 75.
Mr H Walmsley, Malmesbury, Wiltshire.

We love the commemorative stamps you put on your correspondence. **Shirley Paine, Barnstaple.**

Please include something for the absolute beginner!
Kay Leedham, Oxford.

Bridge should not become extinct as it is far too good a game. **Mr K Robinson, Camelford, Cornwall.**

The friendliness of BRIDGE shines through all the unkind words. **Tony Mitchell, Shipston-on-Stour.**

As a beginner I would appreciate some articles aimed at beginners. **Gill Coombs, Brockenhurst.**

Thanks for mentioning BridgeBase. **Colin Moverley, Cheltenham, Glos.**

I am pleased to learn that the prize vouchers for the bridge courses are transferable.
Bomi Kavarana, Tadworth.

Less of the EBU. The whole matter has become extremely boring. **Mrs C Maskew, Gunnislake, Cornwall.**

I cringe when I read of people 'objecting' to advertising.
Mrs Eimear Dawson, St Leonards-on-Sea.

Of the EBU, please, enough.
Ms V Cleaver, Herefordshire.

As it comes free I don't know how I can complain.
Mrs A Glover, Kilmarnock.

No more histories of the origin of Bridge please.
Susan Wrener, Edgware, Middlesex.



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READERS' LETTERS *continued*

100 NOT OUT

We were interested to read in the Christmas edition (page 45) of Mrs Florence Hawkins, who was 100 years old on 19th September. Here in France, we also have a member of our club who was 100 on 23rd November. She plays duplicate bridge twice a week without fail, and is a formidable opponent, never losing her way around a hand. We celebrated with cake and champagne in the club. What a wonderful advert for our great game.

Freda and Marc Nicholson, France.

HOLDING UP

For many years, I was a Bridge Teacher. Reading the letters about big hands reminded me of the time when I noticed a nervous lady who looked more agitated than usual. The class were having one or two random deals at the end of the evening and, when I went over to her, I found that she had opened 2NT with not 20 points but 30! Her partner had some values so I shepherded her into 6NT. In fact, only the king of spades was out against her. The gentleman on lead led – yes – the king of spades.

Occasionally you come across someone who will never make a bridge player and I thought this man was one. However, he enjoyed bridge for many years until his death. Bridge weekends, bridge cruises the lot! My assessment was right but he was such a nice man that he rarely lacked a partner. When I played with him, I was careful to ask the subject of the tutorial at his last bridge weekend. If it was 'Holding up your Ace,' I knew he

would hold up all his aces until the last two or three cards!

Please exclude my name and address because people in this small town would recognise him.

Name & Address Supplied.

KEEPS ME IN TOUCH

This is not so much a question, more a thank you! Apart from a few interruptions for reasons outside my control, I have been an avid bridge player since I was not much more than a child. I am now 96 years old.

Unfortunately, I am much less able to get out to bridge sessions these days. The mind may still be sharp but the body is less forgiving of the passage of time! Fortunately, my BRIDGE magazine continues to brighten my days. It gives me such a lot of pleasure – you have no idea!

I would just like to say a very big 'Thank you' to all at Mr Bridge. That the magazine is free is an added bonus although I would willingly pay for it should it become necessary.

Vi Wintle, Newport, Gwent.

CULBERTSON

Three friends and I in the RAF in 1951, who had never seen bridge, let alone played it, were reading the 1930 edition of Pears Cyclopaedia. One section described the rudiments of the game of bridge. We decided to try it, borrowed a book by Culbertson from the library, and learned the rudiments of his system.

In 1955, we learned Acol. I have never played Culbertson since then, until joining a cruise on the Aurora

in 2000, when I went to the card room to play bridge.

A gentleman from Preston sat opposite me and said, 'I don't play Acol, only Culbertson.' The hosts were Derek and Barbara Rimington. We played duplicate bridge, and my partner and I managed to finish in first place. It was surprisingly easy to come back after such a long time.

Ernie Hulme, Peterborough.

FLY PAPERS

The letter from Mr Jones of Solihull, telling about the 'sticky' dealing of his wife Pauline, reminds me of the bridge games that my wife and I first started with my parents well over 30 years ago. My father used to hate dealing sticky cards. He would make a great fuss and describe the cards as 'fly-papers'. Any readers who are as old as I am will know what they were. We still use the expression in our family when the cards are becoming old and tacky, much to the amusement of our children.

We like the upgrade of Qplus to Version 8.8.

John Newbold, Bournemouth.

TRIVIALISING CHRIST

This morning I received the magazine BRIDGE 86, immediately tore it up, and then had to piece it together to find your address.

Jesus Christ Himself was born in Bethlehem and placed in a manger. It completely belittles this fact to make a pictorial pun of this, with the Christ-Child represented by a card, even if it is a heart.

Perhaps you could have used something with a Christmas tree or whatever, or used the nativity scene in its proper context.

Mrs Hilda Carney, York.

LOVELY COVER

I just want to thank you for your delightful Christmas greetings on the cover of the last magazine! Those three kings really made me laugh and the page now occupies a prominent place in my kitchen.

As throughout the year with your splendid magazine, you have once again given me a lot of pleasure. I hope you, your family and all your staff have a most successful 2008!

Anna Pinson, Horley, Surrey.

TWO HANDS OF POSSIBLE INTEREST

Firstly, LHO opened 1♥ and partner made a cue bid of 2♥, showing a competitive hand with spades and clubs. RHO passed and I had a problem! With a single small spade, two small clubs, three small diamonds and a strong seven-card heart suit, what should I do?

After deliberation, I passed and left partner in 2♥ without a trump in his hand! With the opponents' hearts splitting 4-2, he made the only making contract and gave us a clear top.

Secondly, RHO opened 1♠, I passed, LHO responded 2♦ and that was passed out! The opener attempted to justify the unusual sequence by saying they should not have opened and sought to rectify that error by passing partner's unlimited bid for which they had a fit!

You've guessed, with our balanced points giving good defence to the usual no-trump contract, they made the only making contract to give us a clear bottom.

Just a pair of average hands then, which is what makes duplicate bridge so interesting!

Mr K Lamdin Clacton-on-Sea.

READERS' LETTERS *continued*

SMALL WORLD

How extraordinary that I should be sending this to Ryden Grange – a house I knew well as a child, when it belonged to friends of ours in Hurstpierpoint. I wonder what became of the Grear family who owned it then?

Jane Polden, Chichester.
They moved to Norfolk.

INAPPROPRIATE



I don't think supplying these stamps in a selection package likely to be used around Christmas time, and while the inquest is still open, is appropriate.

Audrey Mattingly, Englefield Green, Surrey.

I have sent some replacements for you. Those readers requiring discounted postage should ring Clive Goff on ☎ 0208 422 4906.

CLUBS NOTE THE PS.

Norman Hart doesn't want to play Bridge, he just wants to gamble. It's money and masterpoints that bring out the *bad* manners.

Mrs Sims, East Preston, Sussex.
PS. Clubs voting on the EBU strategy should ensure members have a secret ballot.

ANY IDEAS

Is there a scoring method for just two tables that would provide a realistic comparative score for the four pairs as happens in larger groups playing

duplicate bridge? I believe many people would be interested in this.

Mr R Hill, Fleet, Hants.

JUST SO

A few days ago after reading your excellent article *6NT requires 33 points*, I was playing a social game of Bridge when my partner (the dealer) opened with 2NT.

I had a nicely balanced hand with 13 points – a quick bit of mental arithmetic. Partner must have 20, 20 plus my 13 gives us at least 33 – so here goes – '6NT,' I said. My partner made a slight grimace but it was passed out and play began.

The ace of spades was led. One down and twelve to go. But from then on it was 'roses all the way' – partner collected one trick after another – until the final one when my partner's queen of clubs fell under the king. Disaster!

'Sorry, partner,' I said – apologising (quite unnecessarily as it transpired) 'but I thought that with my 13 points and your 20 we might have made it.' 'But I had only 19,' was the reply! I pointed out, as politely as I could, that the difference between the queen of clubs and the king was only *one* point – so that if the opening bid had been made on 20 point instead of 19 we would have made it! (If we had had the king. . .)

A perfect vindication of your headline!

Also an illustration of the point you make in your published works that one should always – as far as possible – give one's partner accurate information – *trust is all*.

May I also say that your

Tips for Better Bridge and *Better Hand Evaluation* are my 'Books at Bedtime' and that your *Bidding Quiz* is the icing on the cake in the BRIDGE magazine. Thank you for all your advice.

Mr T Boulton, Barrow upon Humber.

RUBBER FAN

In today's *Sunday Telegraph* there is an article headed 'Bridge tables hit by outbreak of unpleasantness'. Even at my club, which consists largely of well-mannered golden oldies, and where the standard of play is high, bad temper has increased markedly over the years. And no wonder. Some auctions do not contain a single bid that means what it says, except (possibly) the last one. (I contributed a spoof bidding sequence to Bridge Magazine, July 1995, and two very good bridge players took it seriously.)

The tournament director is called several times during a session. Printed cards asking members to behave nicely are placed on the table. Grown men have to endure 'twelve-to-fourteen' every few minutes. The problem is, of course, that the EBU omit the letter D. They are really the English *Duplicate* Bridge Union, and the Standard English system propagated by them, and the similar system propagated by Bridge Magazine, are much too complex. This is not to mention the fact that at higher levels pretty well everything goes, leading to half-hearted 'explanations' during the auction, sour comments afterwards, and making the whole thing a feat of memory.

Bridge is a game designed to be played for money. I am convinced that much the best way to improve your game is to play for stakes slightly

higher than you can afford. Fifty years ago there was still plenty of sixpence-a-hundred Rubber Bridge, but the young now won't look at it. However, in the meantime, a splendid new bridge game has sprung up: *Chicago*.

At an excellent London club where I have played three or four times, the stakes vary from £1 to £100 a hundred, but the only permitted conventions are Stayman, Blackwood and common sense. No transfers, no negative doubles. (A lot of money is made from penalty doubles of low-level contracts). I believe that at another London (private) club, where the stakes are £20 a hundred, not even Stayman and Blackwood are permitted.

Not everyone may be aware that Chicago rubbers consist of four hands, after which you change partners. You can 'cut in' at any table you fancy. The problem is, of course, that at most clubs you are not permitted to play for money. But prizes can be awarded, and bets can be made. Try it.

Mr J Merz, Norwich.

SADLY NO MORE

I really miss the old style *Daily Bridge Calendar*. Please bring it back.

Robert Owen, Exeter.

The publishers just stopped producing, but I do have something in mind.

INTO WALES?

Hurrah – You have an event in Cheshire, though I have no idea where Wychwood Park is. Do you feel there would be no support for events in North Wales? There are many Bridge players in this area.

Jean Sumner, Flintshire.

Be assured I will look. ▶

READERS' LETTERS *continued*

MY PLEASURE

Thank you so much for continuing to send me your magazine. To some extent I feel rather guilty, because now in my advanced years, I play nowhere near as much bridge as I should like to and have no need to purchase further items. But I do enjoy receiving and reading BRIDGE.

**Albert Edwards,
Borehamwood.**

[I will continue to post BRIDGE to you until told to stop.](#)

MEDICAL BENEFIT OF BRIDGE

The bridge authorities need to get top names in the medical profession to do a study as to the benefits that bridge brings to the older generation. Remembering that everyone feels guilty about older people but no one wants to be bothered with them. *That is the truth.*

The study will show the enormous cost that could be saved by the NHS, this must be emphasised. As much publicity as possible – TV, papers, radio etc remember, everyone feels guilty. It also has to be done quickly – six months at most. All the costs will be shown as against the savings. My idea is for free lessons – in old people's homes, clubs, wherever, also transport to be subsidised to clubs. There are many other ways to encourage people.

This would then be presented to the Health Secretary again with as much publicity as ever; this should be slanted at the children of the 'old uns', making them feel guilty as they do.

I think aiming at the younger generation will fail, there is too much going on in the world but if you get

something going with the older generation then the younger will surely follow.

The downside is that you would have to pay for the study but if handled properly I think the amount the experts will want for helping the older generation will be minimal.

I expect this to be torn up and the death knoll of bridge to continue to ring. Please think about it.

**Mr T O'Brine,
Littlehampton, West Sussex.**

This has been done. Results of a study done in America were published in 2003 and showed that mental activities such as bridge greatly reduced the risk of dementia, whereas physical exercise did not. An earlier study in 2000 from the University of California, Berkeley, showed that both the problem solving aspects of bridge and the social interaction bridge involves had benefits to the immune system.

In short, playing bridge reduces the risk of developing illnesses like Alzheimer's disease. At the time the studies received widespread coverage all round the world and bridge received a positive publicity boost. National bridge authorities often refer to the results of these studies in their own publicity.

IT MADE MY DAY

An amazing thing has happened to me. On the evening of Sunday December 2nd, I received a telephone call from a lady who announced herself as the producer of Radio 4's Today programme. She said she was calling about the article in the *Sunday Telegraph* that printed an excerpt from my

letter regarding the future of bridge in this country. I asked her what she was talking about and she said she would e-mail the article to me, which she did. She went on to say that the main reason she was ringing was to ask me if I would take part in a live debate next morning on the Today Programme!

Somewhat dazed, I said 'yes of course' and we proceeded to make arrangements for me to be picked up. She then dropped the second bombshell. 'You will be participating in a live studio discussion with Tony Forrester'. At this point I was beginning to think I was dreaming or maybe someone was playing a rather nasty prank on me. However, I rushed out and bought a copy of the *Sunday Telegraph* and there it all was on page 9. The excerpt was taken from my letter that appeared in BRIDGE 86. It could still have been a prank but next morning, as promised, a car arrived outside my house at 7.20 am to take me to the studio so it was all perfectly genuine.

Our live discussion went out at twenty past eight on Monday morning and I thought it went very well. Tony and I had a good five minutes before we were interrupted by John Humphreys with breaking news which was a shame because we could easily have talked for 20 minutes or more. My other regret was that I didn't get to meet Tony Forrester because he was in

another studio, probably London.

All this happened because of my letter that appeared in your magazine and which somehow managed to get itself into the *Telegraph*. Of course Tony Forrester should have been a part of this debate as he's England's number one player, but I did feel a little bit of an impostor.

**Norman Hart,
Wheathampstead.**

RUBBER BRIDGE

Do you not recognise rubber bridge? There are no holidays where rubber bridge is played. I would love to go on a rubber bridge break, but do not wish to play duplicate. I am quite proficient at rubber bridge despite being 80 years old.

Pax Payton-Smart, Reading.
[See page 35 for details of our Rubber / Chicago breaks.](#)

OOPS!

My pc detects no errors in the following rhyme; I think the total count is 24, unless your readers know better!

*Aye have a spelling chequer,
It came with my pea see,
It plane lee Marx four my
revue,
Miss takes aye can knot sea.
Iran this poem threw it and,
As far as eye can tell,
Its letter perfect inn it's weigh,
My chequer tolled me sew!*

Hugh Williams, Daventry.
Hugh is a proof reader for BRIDGE. He was not given a chance to read his name misspelt in the last issue. Please accept my profuse apologies, Hugh. ■

**Write to Mr Bridge at:
Ryden Grange, Bisley, Surrey GU21 2TH
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E-mail correspondents are asked to include their name, full postal address and telephone number, and to send no attachments.

Letters may be edited for length and clarity.



More Reaction to the EBU Proposals



ALLOWING ALL A SAY

I am writing to thank you for the brilliant Christmas issue (BRIDGE 86). As usual the readers' letters are a mixture, some interesting, some boring, some mundane. What is important is that your magazine allows the rank and file to be heard. You give them a voice. The other magazines print very few letters and usually either mundane letters, or letters praising their magazine. By giving the rank and file a voice, in my view you do more for bridge than the EBU, who nowadays only seem to cater for the elite and the regular tournament attendees.

The Christmas issue contained an article by Sally Bugden, which I have read several times but I am none the wiser, merely confused. In contrast, the article by Don Pearson was one of the funniest (and wickedly and uncomfortably accurate) articles I have ever read.

I do not understand why BRIDGE, which is free, is almost always a better read than the other magazines, even though we pay for them, either directly or indirectly via our EBU sub. Perhaps you should ask Sally Bugden. On second thoughts, don't bother.

Keep up the good work. At least somebody is standing up for the turkeys – sorry,

rank-and-file and allowing them to be heard.

Bob Rowlands, London W14.

SERIOUS DEBATE PLEASE

I am one of the many of your readers who admires BRIDGE magazine and contrasts it favourably with the EBU's own in-house publication, which has struggled in the past to maintain the same levels of interest and professional presentation. As a member of the EBU, I was delighted to see that Elena Jeronimidis had agreed to become Editor of *English Bridge*. Indeed, we are already seeing evidence of improvement since she assumed the role.

BRIDGE deserves praise for its role in the continuing debate about the now infamous 'EBU proposals'. However, I read with some dismay the letter on the subject of the 'Strategy for Newton Abbot Football Universal' in BRIDGE 86. It treats the whole subject of the proposals as some sort of joke and dismisses the EBU's efforts to improve the service that it offers to the game of bridge as a worthless exercise. It is such a pity that the author, who is clearly blessed with a vivid imagination and some literary talent, did not further the debate by putting forward some worthwhile

ideas of his own.

The EBU has at least recognised that there is a national problem with the way that our game of bridge is going and is trying to do something about it with this discussion. While I do not fully agree with all the proposals, since I cannot come up with any better ideas, the last thing I would want to do is to try and snuff out sensible dialogue.

David G Thackaberry, Westbury, Wiltshire.

NOT A CLUB

Many of your correspondents have objected, with good cause, to the notion that the potential changes in EBU membership will compel them, against their wishes, to become paying members of the EBU. I have the opposite problem!

I am now an individual member, a category that I understand is to be no more. So I will be excluded from membership unless I join an affiliated club. At present, I have a choice of three duplicate sessions per week each involving 7 to 12 tables. These are run informally under the auspices of a sympathetic local bridge teacher. We do not even regard ourselves as a 'club'. We just show up, pay our table money to meet the costs of hiring premises, etc. and play. So I have

neither need nor desire to join any bridge club, affiliated or not.

I would like to continue my membership of the EBU, but it appears I shall be thrown out.

Richard Ackland, Kenley, Surrey.

BULLIED INTO LEAVING

I am Chairman of Anlaby Bridge Club near Hull. We now are greatly reduced in numbers and very few of the remaining members are, like me, members of the EBU. They will want us to resign from it. After so many years, I feel this is a great pity.

Mrs Edna Hunter, North Ferriby, East Yorkshire.

VOTES FOR ALL?

Just a couple of questions for the EBU about their Extraordinary General Meeting on June 4th – we all know how important it is to the EBU to get a fair reflection on their proposals. I am sure we do not want decisions taken based on the online votes of 744 members!

In the light of this:

- 1 Will there be postal votes for all EBU members who cannot attend?
- 2 As this decision will affect all non-EBU members of affiliated clubs, will they too get a vote?

Chris Nichols, Bude BC, Cornwall. ■



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1 - 3 Barony Castle



The Olde Barn, Marston

1 - 3 Beach Hotel
Gentle Duplicate

1 - 3 Latimer House

7 - 27 **Antarctica
and Chilean
Fjords**

8 - 10 Staverton Park

8 - 10 The Beach Hotel

8 - 10 Theobalds Park
Gentle Duplicate

15 - 17 Staverton Park
Gentle Duplicate

19 - 21 Marsham Court
Gentle Duplicate



Latimer House, Chesham

FEBRUARY cont

21 - 19/3 **Chile, Galapagos,
Peru and
Ecuador**

22 - 24 Latimer House

22 - 24 The Olde Barn
Gentle Duplicate

22 - 24 Staverton Park

24 - 9/3 **Tunisia**

24 - 26 Marsham Court

29 - 2/3 Staverton Park
Improvers



MV Discovery

29 - 2/3 Theobalds Park

MARCH 2008

7 - 9 Barony Castle

7 - 9 Harben House
Gentle Duplicate

7 - 9 Latimer House

9 - 11 Marsham Court
Gentle Duplicate

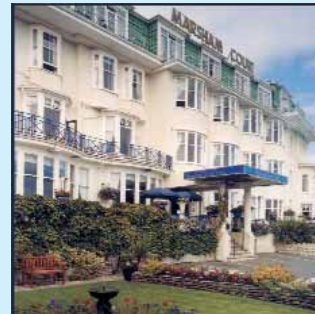
14 - 31 **Cuba, Galapagos
& Panama
Canal**

14 - 16 Latimer House

MARCH cont

14 - 16 The Olde Barn

20 - 24 Staverton Park
Easter (4 nights)



Marsham Court, Bournemouth

28 - 30 The Olde Barn
Improvers

28 - 30 Theobalds Park
Gentle Duplicate

30 - 15/4 **Amazon Cruise**

APRIL 2008

4 - 6 Latimer House
Improvers

4 - 6 The Beach Hotel
Rubber Bridge

11 - 13 Staverton Park
Gentle Duplicate

11 - 13 Theobalds Park

11 - 13 Wychwood Park

13 - 15 Marsham Court
Gentle Duplicate

14 - 27 **Amazon and
the Caribbean**

18 - 20 Staverton Park

18 - 20 Theobalds Park
Gentle Duplicate

APRIL cont

25 - 27 Latimer House

25 - 27 The Olde Barn
Gentle Duplicate

25 - 27 Staverton Park
Improvers

26 - 10/5 **Caribbean &
Atlantic Isles**

MAY 2008

2 - 5 Staverton Park
Bank Holiday
(3 nights)

9 - 11 Harben House

9 - 11 Milton Hill House

9 - 11 Theobalds Park
Gentle Duplicate

9 - 11 The Olde Barn



Staverton Park, Daventry

Rubber Bridge

10 - 24 **Northern Capitals**

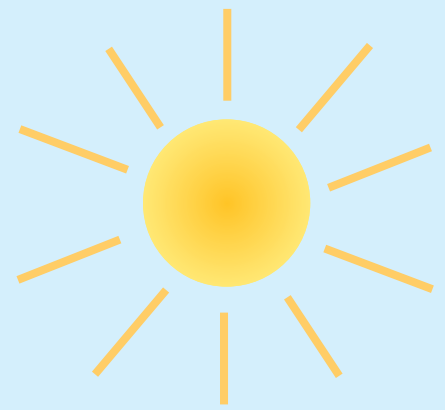
16 - 18 Milton Hill House

16 - 18 Staverton Park
Gentle Duplicate

16 - 18 The Olde Barn

23 - 26 Staverton Park
Bank Holiday

Holidays, Weekends



Comprehensive list. Cruises are in blue, overseas holidays in green and UK breaks in black.

(3 nights)

Gentle Duplicate

(3 nights)

Gentle Duplicate

MAY cont



Port El Kantaoui, Tunisia

- 24 - 31 Norwegian Fjords
- 31 - 11/6 Fjords, Faroes, Fire & Ice I

JUNE 2008

- 6 - 8 The Beach Hotel



Milton Hill House, Oxon

- 6 - 8 Staverton Park Gentle Duplicate
- 11 - 21 Midnight Sun
- 13 - 15 Harben House
- 21 - 4/7 Baltic Treasures
- 27 - 29 Theobalds Park

JULY 2008

- 4 - 14 Fjords & Scottish Islands
- 11 - 13 Harben House
- 14 - 25 Fjords, Faroes, Fire & Ice II
- 18 - 20 Staverton Park Gentle Duplicate
- 25 - 27 Theobalds Park



Barony Castle, Nr Peebles

- Gentle Duplicate
- 25 - 7/8 Arctic Circle & Eclipse

AUGUST 2008

- 7 - 14 Fjords & Fairytales
- 7 - 24 Grand Scandinavia
- 8 - 10 Harben House
- 14 - 24 Baltic Capitals
- 15 - 17 Staverton Park Gentle Duplicate
- 22 - 25 Staverton Park Bank Holiday

AUGUST cont

- 22 - 24 Theobalds Park or 25 Rubber / Chicago
- 24 - 4/9 Baltic Explorer
- 29 - 31 Staverton Park

SEPTEMBER 2008

- 4 - 11 Riviera Cruise
- 5 - 7 Theobalds Park
- 11 - 20 Italian Odyssey
- 12 - 14 Milton Hill House
- 12 - 14 Staverton Park
- 19 - 21 Latimer House
- 19 - 21 Milton Hill House

- 20 - 2/10 Adriatic & Aegean Treasures
- 26 - 28 Milton Hill House
- 26 - 28 Staverton Park
- 26 - 28 The Beach Hotel Rubber / Chicago
- 26 - 28 Theobalds Park



The Beach Hotel, Worthing

OCTOBER 2008

- 2 - 13 Black Sea I
- 3 - 5 Harben House
- 3 - 5 Theobalds Park
- 10 - 12 Milton Hill House



Theobalds Park, Cheshunt

- 10 - 12 Staverton Park Improvers
- 13 - 24 Black Sea Discovery II
- 17 - 19 Staverton Park Gentle Duplicate
- 17 - 19 The Beach Hotel
- 17 - 19 Theobalds Park
- 24 - 26 The Olde Barn
- 24 - 26 Barony Castle
- 24 - 26 Harben House Gentle Duplicate
- 24 - 26 Wychwood Park
- 24 - 4/11 Aegean Odyssey
- 31 - 2/11 Milton Hill House Improvers
- 31 - 2/11 Staverton Park



Combine Your Chances

When two or more lines of play are possible, it is not always necessary to choose between them. On a good day, you are able to try one suit and, if you find it unfavourably disposed, try another one instead!

Here is an example of what I mean:

♠ 6 4									
♥ A J 10 5									
♦ 7 3									
♣ A K J 10 3									
<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S	
	N								
W		E							
	S								
♠ A K J 10 9									
♥ Q 9 4									
♦ A 5									
♣ 9 8 2									

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♥	Pass	3NT
End			

West leads a low diamond against your 3NT contract, unkindly removing your only stopper there. Since the defenders threaten to run the diamonds as soon as they get in, you will need to make nine tricks without losing the lead. You have six tricks on top and potential for three more in each of the other suits – so which suit should you try?

The answer is to try them all!

Cash the ♣A-K first. If the club queen drops, you are home. If she doesn't appear, cash the ♠A-K. If the queen of spades drops, again you have your nine tricks. If neither queen appears, your last chance is to try the heart finesse.

This line of play is *much* more likely to succeed than any that puts all of your eggs into one basket. Three chances are much better than one!

In situations where you are able to combine your chances in more than one suit, you often need to do things in the right order. On this deal, if you were to tackle spades before clubs, for example, you would end up in the wrong hand to take a heart finesse if neither black suit cooperated.

If you come to take the heart finesse, which card should you lead from the South hand to take it? The nine of hearts is correct – you can continue with the queen if it holds. (Give West ♥K-8-7-6 to see why you play this way). It would be a shame to get this far only to fall at the last hurdle.

Sometimes it is harder to spot where your extra chances are. Take this hand:

♠ K 2									
♥ 6 4 3									
♦ A 9 4 2									
♣ Q 5 3 2									
<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S	
	N								
W		E							
	S								
♠ A Q J 8 4 3									
♥ K 2									
♦ K 3									
♣ A K 7									

You reach 6♠ after an uncontested auction. West leads a club. There are 11 top winners. How many chances for a twelfth trick do you see?

If the ace of hearts is with East, you will be able to lead up to your king of hearts to set up a twelfth trick.

You have an extra chance, also, that the clubs divide 3-3. If they do, you will be able to discard your possible second heart loser on dummy's long club, making the contract irrespective of where the ace of hearts is. If they do not break kindly, you can fall back on the hearts – so you intend to play clubs before hearts.

However, there is yet another chance to make the contract. Playing off the two top diamonds and ruffing a diamond will set up the nine of diamonds any time one defender began with ♦Q-J-10 exactly. Granted, this is very unlikely, but it costs you nothing to try. If you are able to add just two or three percent to the odds of succeeding each time you declare a hand, over a year that adds up – to a lot of matchpoints, masterpoints, money or whatever it is you play for.

Combining All Your Chances

The line of play that caters for all of your chances is to draw trumps and then play three rounds of diamonds, ruffing the third. If you are so lucky that the ♦Q-J-10 have dropped, you can try the clubs for an overtrick (and should buy a lottery ticket). If the nine of diamonds is not established, try the ♣A-K-Q to see if the clubs divide 3-3. If they do, you have 12 tricks. In practice West shows out on the third round. When neither of the minor suits cooperates, your last resort is to try leading a heart up to the king, hoping the ace of hearts is inside.

Make Your Own Luck

I once saw a hand where declarer, an expert, had a diamond suit consisting of the singleton two opposite the ace, jack and three. He crossed to the ace of diamonds and ruffed the three, bringing down the ♦K-Q doubleton from one of the defenders! (He was my teammate at the time, thankfully). This play made his 4♠ contract, and won us the match. Yes, this is very, very lucky, but how many of us would even visualize this possibility?

Look carefully for where your chances are, and then try to find a line of play that combines them all. The effort will be well worthwhile. ■