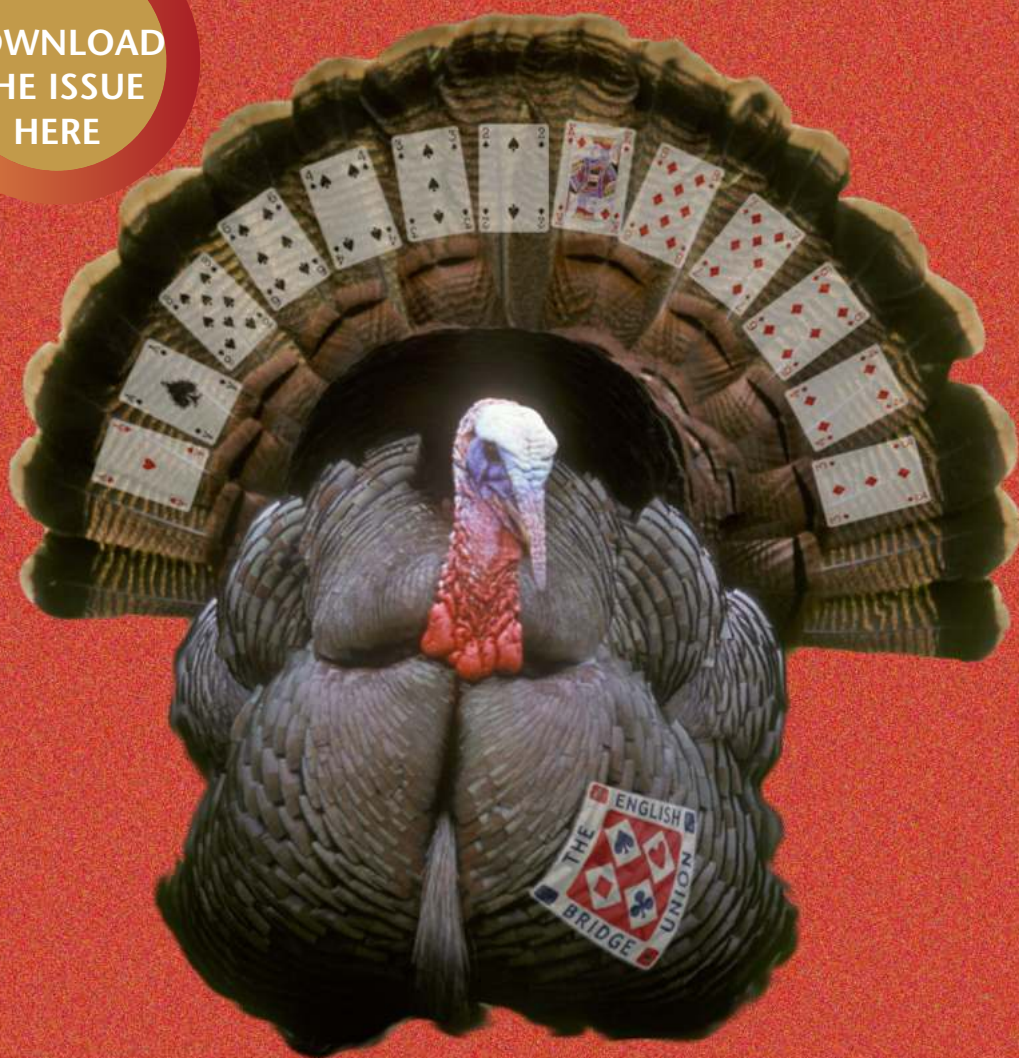


# ENGLISH

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# BRIDGE

The EBU members' magazine – December 2023 – Issue 303





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01 Feb	4* H10 Rubicon Palace Hotel Playa Blanca Lanzarote	Duplicate	7 - 14
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13 Mar	4* Fuerte El Rompido Huelva Southern Spain	Bridge, Bowls Walk & Golf	7 - 14
02 Apr	4* Palmon Bay Hotel & Spa Herceg Montenegro	Duplicate	7 - 12
14 Apr	4* Barcelo Occidental Playa De Palma Spain	Duplicate	7 - 14
16 Apr	5* Paloma Perissia Hotel Side Southern Turkey	SBU Congress	7
04 May	5* Mediterranean Hotel Rhodes Greece	Duplicate	7 - 14
18 May	Boreas Gulet Bodrum Southern Turkey	Bridge Cruise	7
30 May	4* Hotel Torretta Montecatini Tuscany Italy	Duplicate & Tour	10
11 Jun	4* Hotel Onabrava & Spa Santa Susanna Spain	Duplicate & Tour	7 - 14
06 Jul	3* Westhill Country Hotel Jersey	Duplicate	7
11 Aug	3* Ramsey Park Hotel Isle of Man	Duplicate	7
27 Aug	4* Hotel Torretta Montecatini Tuscany Italy	Duplicate & Tour	10
14 Sep	4* Marina Grand Beach Hotel Varna Bulgaria	Duplicate	7 - 21
26 Sep	4* Sentido Pearl Beach Hotel Rethymnon Crete	Irish Bridge Festival	7 - 14
05 Oct	4* Fuerte El Rompido Huelva Southern Spain	Bridge, Bowls Walk & Golf	7 - 21

**UK CALENDAR 2024**

18 Jan	The Lambert Hotel Watlington	Duplicate	5
06 Feb	Charlecote Pheasant Hotel Stratford Upon-Avon	Duplicate	4
22 Feb	Newbury West Grange Hotel Newbury	Duplicate	4
04 Mar	Marsham Court Hotel Bournemouth	Duplicate	4
11 Mar	Dunston Hall Hotel & Spa Norwich	Duplicate	4
21 Mar	The Lambert Hotel Watlington	Duplicate	4
28 Mar	Metropole Hotel & Spa Llandrindod Wells	Duplicate	4
03 Apr	White Swan Hotel Alnwick	Duplicate & Gin	4
11 Apr	Whitehouse Hotel Worcester	Duplicate & Tour	4
25 Apr	The Grange Hotel Grange Over Sands Cumbria	Duplicate	5
09 May	Holiday Inn Hotel Coventry	Duplicate	4
16 May	Holiday Inn Hotel Milton Keynes Centre	Duplicate	4
27 May	Belton Woods Hotel Grantham	Duplicate & Golf	4
03 Jun	Marsham Court Hotel Bournemouth	Duplicate	4
09 Jun	Croyde Bay Resort Hotel North Devon	Duplicate	6
17 Jun	Old Swan Hotel Harrogate	Duplicate & Tour	4

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# English Bridge

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## Steering the EBU

This is the first issue of English Bridge to which I have made a contribution, so perhaps I should start with some words of introduction.

Ian Payn was chairman for the last four years, and I succeeded him some weeks ago. It is a great privilege to be the EBU Chair, and I am looking forward to meeting all the many challenges. The organisation owes Ian enormous gratitude for his long years of service, especially for having steered us through the Covid period without catastrophe, and for being such an effective and robust leader.

I hope the challenges I face will be a little more mundane than lockdown!

As a Board Member I have been looking at our role in the teaching of students, integrating newcomers into our clubs and helping new players move, according to their own ambitions, into the many competitions, both face-to-face and online. We will be looking at how we can improve on this. I am also especially concerned by the demographic of our membership and the obvious need to recruit and retain new members. Our marketing efforts need revisiting.

I am particularly interested in club and county bridge (for many years I was the North-East Bridge Association Secretary and I am in my seventh year as Chair of the Durham Bridge Club). We all start our journey as EBU members in an affiliated club and that is where we meet match-pointed pairs, simultaneous pairs, teams, Master Points, NGS etc. Clubs are the route into county competitions and beyond, and I think it is imperative that we view the health of the EBU as directly linked to the health of our varied and wonderful clubs and counties.

For those interested, my own bridge history started as a teenager, but I hardly played when I went to university. In my 20s and 30s I played a lot of squash, and when I stopped playing squash several times a week I discovered the squash club

had a weekly bridge evening. I restarted playing bridge in my 40s, and have been playing club and county bridge for about 30 years. As we all know, it's a wonderful game and we, the current players, really do have some duty to share it both with those who have never played and with those who have played, but for not some years.

### BRIDGE – IT'S A BIG DEAL!

To this end the English Bridge Union has exciting plans for 'Bridge – It's a Big Deal!', a festival of bridge to take place in September next year. It will be designed as one element to address the perennial issue of attracting new players to our wonderful game. This festival is a fantastic idea and a superb opportunity for the current bridge community to showcase our game to the many who have never played and to reignite the enthusiasm amongst those who have played but not in last decade or so. I sincerely hope that everyone – our members, our clubs, our counties – will get behind it and attract a new cohort to the bridge tables. The festival will enable members to engage in a variety of events and help grow the bridge community. Ideas have already been launched through our online meetings of counties and all the details will be announced later, but it's never too early to start thinking about what you or your club or your county could contribute to this dedicated nationwide project.

### PARTNERING WITH CANCER RESEARCH UK

We have partnered with Cancer Research UK for the Festival and proceeds from the many activities will support the vital work of CRUK, so all your work will contribute not only to the health of the community of bridge but also to the important work of our CRUK partners.

I look forward to working with everyone as we all strive in our common cause to ensure that bridge maintains its recovery from the Covid years and moves from strength to strength. □



# Christmas Quiz 2023

by Zia Mahmood

**Zia Mahmood** is this year's master compiler to test your bridge brain. Send in your answers for a chance to **win our most coveted prizes and, in addition, the top three entries all win a signed copy of Zia's must-read new book:**

## 'Bridge, A Love Story'

### The Worshipful Company of Makers of Playing Cards

has again very generously donated a double-pack of the most recent Master's playing cards. This set celebrates 100 years since the discovery of the Tomb of Tutankhamun, and continues an annual tradition of Masters' cards dating back to 1882.

Each pack is beautifully designed, the twin packs of cards are presented in a leather case, and are limited to 350 sets. The cards also come with a booklet about the very clever card design and the history of Tutankhamun.

The cards depict a selection of the artefacts and treasures to come out of the tomb of Tutankhamun, using non standard pips, depicting some of the artefacts and the Royal Family.

### First prize



### Second prize

**£50 EBU credit**  
In the event of a tie the winners will be picked randomly

**B**idding. You are South, playing Acol with a weak no trump and Weak 2 openings in diamonds, hearts and spades.

**Q1** Game All, IMPs. What is your opening bid?

♠ A J 9 8 7  
♥ A Q  
♦ A K J 10 8 3  
♣ –

**Q2** E/W Game All, IMPs. What call do you make?

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

W	N	E	S
Pass	1♠	1NT	1♥
			?

**O**pening lead. You are sitting West.

**Q3** What is your opening lead?

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

**Game All. IMPs. Dealer West**

W	N	E	S
1♥	3♥ <sup>1</sup>	Pass	3NT <sup>2</sup>
Pass	Pass	Dble <sup>3</sup>	All Pass

<sup>1</sup> Asking for a heart stop;

<sup>2</sup> Showing a heart stop;

<sup>3</sup> No special agreement.

**Q4** What is your opening lead?

♠ Q 7 5 2  
♥ –  
♦ K J 4 3 2  
♣ K Q J 3

**Game All. IMPs. Dealer South.**

W	N	E	S
			1♥
Dble	2NT <sup>1</sup>	4♠	5♥
5♠	6♦ <sup>2</sup>	Dble <sup>3</sup>	6♥
Pass	Pass	Dble	All Pass

<sup>1</sup> Strong heart raise;

<sup>2</sup> First-round diamond control;

<sup>3</sup> Lead a diamond, partner.

*Continued overleaf*

**D**efence. You are sitting West, playing Teams.  
**Q5**

Love All. IMPs. Dealer North.

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

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



W	N	E	S
	1♠ <sup>1</sup>	Pass	1NT <sup>2</sup>
Pass	2♦ <sup>3</sup>	Pass	2NT <sup>4</sup>
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

<sup>1</sup> Playing strong NT;

<sup>2</sup> Forcing for one round;

<sup>3</sup> Five+ spades, three+ diamonds

<sup>4</sup> 11-12 points, balanced, not forcing.

You, West, lead the ♣K. The ♣4 is played from dummy, partner plays the ♣2 and declarer ♣3. If partner had ♣A or ♣J he would have played an honour to trick one, so declarer has ♣AJ3. What do you lead to the second trick?

**Q6**

N/S Game. IMPs. Dealer North.

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

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



W	N	E	S
	1♠ <sup>1</sup>	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

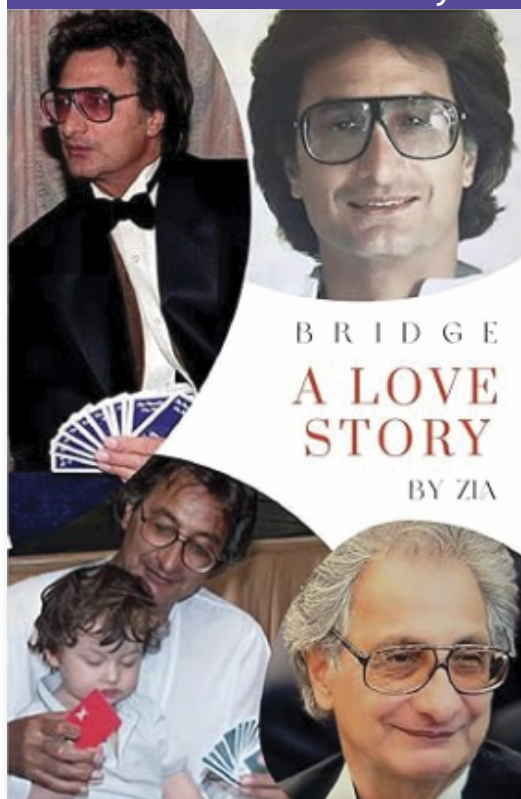
<sup>1</sup> Playing strong NT and 5CM.

You, West, lead the ♦K. Dummy plays the ♦3, partner the ♦J, and declarer the ♦2. Partner's card shows the ♦J109 and perhaps another, but denies the ♦Q so declarer still has that. You cash the ♦K, on which dummy plays the ♦8, partner the ♦5 and declarer the ♦Q. Describe your plan for the defence.

*Continued overleaf*

## BRIDGE, A LOVE STORY

By Zia



The top three entries will all receive a signed copy of Zia's compelling memoir detailing his passion for the great game. Zia – probably the world's most renowned bridge player – unlocks his personal bridge vault to share the secrets to his remarkable and enduring success over 50 years. Fast-paced, irreverent, humorous and instructive, this critically acclaimed book is for all levels, from beginner to super-expert. Join Zia as he travels the world playing mega high-stakes games in exclusive clubs as well as under the spotlight at international tournaments. If you don't win it, treat yourself to a copy, demand one for Christmas, or give one to a friend (to lend back to you). Available from Amazon and AndrewRobson Online.

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**Michael Rosenberg**





# Christmas Quiz cont . . .

by Zia Mahmood

Q7

N/S Game. IMPs. Dealer South.

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

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



W	N	E	S
Pass	3NT	All Pass	1NT <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 12-14 ish.

You are West. On your opening lead of the ♦Q dummy plays the ♦5, partner plays the ♦2 (discouraging) and declarer wins with ♦A. South now leads the ♣8. Describe your plan for the defence.

**D**eclarer play. You are sitting South, playing Teams (IMPs).

Q8

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



♠ J 9 3  
♥ A 8 2  
♦ A Q 9 8  
♣ J 9 8

N/S Game. IMPs.

South	North
1NT	3NT

West leads the ♠6, playing fourth best from suits with honours and second best from bad suits.

Describe your planned line of play.

Q9

♠ K J 10 7 5  
♥ A 2  
♦ 9 7  
♣ A K 6 5



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

N/S Game. IMPs.

W	N	E	S
5♦	6♣	All Pass	1♠

West leads the ♦2. Describe your planned line of play, catering for as many contingencies as possible.

Q10

♠ A K 3  
♥ K 6 5  
♦ 7 6 2  
♣ A K 4 3



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

N/S Game. IMPs.

W	N	E	S
Pass	1♣	Pass	1♠
Pass	1NT <sup>1</sup>	Pass	2♠ <sup>2</sup>
Pass	2♠ <sup>3</sup>	Pass	4♠

All Pass  
<sup>1</sup> 15-17;  
<sup>2</sup> Checkback, asking for info;  
<sup>3</sup> Max with three spades.

West leads the ♥Q, on which East plays the ♥2, the opponents using standard honour leads and signals. Describe your planned line of play.

## COME ON! GIVE IT A GO

Send your entries by email or post not later than 31st December. By email: [lou@ebu.co.uk](mailto:lou@ebu.co.uk) or by post:

Lou Hobhouse, Raggett House, Bowdens,  
Langport, Somerset, TA10 0DD.

## ANSWERS IN FEBRUARY ISSUE



# Heffalump Traps

In each of the following hands you are sitting South. You are playing in a teams match with IMPs scoring. You should plan to give yourself the best chance of making your contract, even if that means giving up on the possibility of making overtricks.

Hand 1

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



♠ A J 7  
♥ A Q 6 3  
♦ A J 10  
♣ 10 9 6

You are in 3NT West leads the ♠5. Plan your play.

Hand 2

♠ 8 3  
♥ A K 2  
♦ A 8 6 3 2  
♣ Q J 6



♠ K 5  
♥ 4  
♦ 10 5 4  
♣ A K 10 9 5 3 2

You are in 5♣ after West opened 1♠. West leads the ♥Q. Plan your play.

Hand 3

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



♠ A Q 4  
♥ 10 6 5  
♦ K Q 10 9 5  
♣ A 8

You are in 6♦. West leads the ♥Q. Plan your play.

Hand 4

♠ Q 5  
♥ 6 4  
♦ 8 6 4  
♣ Q 10 9 8 5 3



♠ A K 6 2  
♥ A J  
♦ A 10 3  
♣ K J 4 2

You are in 3NT. West leads the ♦5 and East plays the ♦K. Plan your play.

# CLUB PLAYER'S BIDDING QUIZ

You are sitting West. What should you bid with each hand below on the given auction at matchpoint pairs? Assume love all except where indicated.

Hand 1

♠ 5 3  
♥ –  
♦ A Q J 8 3  
♣ K Q J 6 5 2

W	N	E	S
			4♥
?			

Hand 2

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

W	N	E	S
		1♠	3♥
?			

Hand 3

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

W	N	E	S
		3♦	Dble
?			

Hand 4

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

W	N	E	S
			4♥
?			

Hand 5

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

W	N	E	S
	1♦	2NT <sup>1</sup>	3♦
?			

<sup>1</sup> Lowest two suits, 5+ 5+

Hand 6

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

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	3♣	Pass
?			

David Bakhshi gives the answers on page 48

Julian Pottage gives his answers on page 61



## Responding with an invitational or better hand

The previous issue looked at how to respond when you have a weak hand and your partner has opened the bidding with one of a suit. This is surprisingly complicated given that we are only dealing with hands of at most nine HCP! The good news is that responding is nearly always simpler when you have a stronger hand, as you are strong enough to bid your longest suit at the two level if that is what's required.

It's important to note that just because you *can* change suit at the two level doesn't mean you *should*. Do not jump to show 10+ points. If the suit you intend to bid is available at the one level, bid at the one level. Even with 16 or 20 points. Changing suit is forcing. No need to jump.

### IS YOUR HAND WORTH 10 POINTS?

You will have heard before that you should have at least 10 HCP to bid a new suit at the two level (not a previously bid suit: if you want to support your partner with 10 HCP, you have to jump to the three level); but bidding isn't about slavishly following point counts! The idea behind this 10-point lower boundary is twofold: firstly, that since you are making a bid that forces your partner to rebid at the two level even with a minimum opener, you should be guaranteeing that your side holds more than half of the HCP; and secondly, that you have at least an invitational hand and would therefore like to be in game opposite a good minimum – since 14-15 is a good minimum opener, you need 10 to ensure that you get to game when your partner has 15 (as you then have the desired 25).

However, when playing Acol, there is a better definition for the hands that should be considered strong enough to bid a new suit at the two level. If the opener has a balanced hand, intending to rebid no trumps showing more than 12-14 points, a responder who has changed suit at the two level expects to go to game. Responder is showing at least 10 HCP and opener at least 15, both parties are aware that they have enough strength for game; so,

even though no trump bids are usually non-forcing, in this specific case the 2NT rebid is actually forcing to game! The strength requirement for bidding a new suit at the two level is that you want to go to game opposite a 15+-point balanced hand, although the eventual game doesn't need to be no trumps.

Consider this example after partner opens 1♠:

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

You only have nine points but once you know that your partner has at least two clubs, you can expect your hand to produce six tricks the majority

of the time. Partner will nearly always be able to provide three more from a 15-point hand; therefore, 3NT will be making frequently and you should respond with 2♣.

Now look at this hand:

♠ 5 4  
♥ Q 3  
♦ Q 10 3  
♣ K Q 7 5 4 2

You also have nine HCP here. However, the clubs are going to be much more difficult to establish with this suit quality and there may not be enough entries to your hand to be able

to reach your slow winners. This time, stick to responding with 1NT.

When deciding whether your 8- or 9-point hand is worth a 2-level response, consider:

- ♣ Suit length – how many tricks are on offer once your suit is established?
- ♣ Suit quality – how difficult will it be to establish your suit if partner has a low doubleton?
- ♣ Entries – will declarer be able to reach the dummy (usually your hand) to enjoy your tricks?

### CHOOSING WHICH SUIT TO BID

Mostly, this is straightforward and follows normal bidding principles:

- ♣ Bid your longest suit if you have one.
- ♣ With 4-4 in two suits, bid the cheaper of the two. Cheaper does not mean the lower ranking – it

means the lowest available at the time of bidding. Say you have four hearts and four clubs. If partner opens 1♦, then 1♥ is cheaper than 2♣. If partner opens 1♠, then 2♣ is cheaper than 2♥.

- ♣ With 5-5 in two suits, bid the higher-ranking of the two.

Your partner will take you for at least four cards in the suit you have bid. However, the number of cards you are promising may, on rare occasions, vary; and this is all because of one specific rule for one specific auction.

**Rule:** 1♠ – 2♥ always promises five plus hearts.

Why would that be? Well, notice how much bidding space has gone and remember that the first priority for strain is to locate an 8-card major fit. You need to ensure that you can find both your 4-4 and 5-3 heart fits below 3NT but the two level has almost been entirely used up already! If your partner rebids 3♦ or 3♠, how do you intend to locate a 5-3 heart fit if you have the following hand and your 2♥ bid only promised four cards?

Let's look at this example:

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

If your partner opened 1♠, you replied 2♥ which you played as four plus hearts, and your partner rebid 3♠. Then, to show five hearts you would have to

either bypass 3NT, in the hope that you have a fit, or hope that you don't have a fit and just try 3NT: a gamble either way! If you have a 5-3 fit, you want to make sure that your partner raises you in hearts when you bid 2♥. He can only do this if he isn't worried that you may only have four.

How do we find a 4-4 heart fit if 1♠ – 2♥ promises five cards?

Think about what kind of hand your partner will have if they have four hearts, given that they opened 1♠. It can't be 4-4 in the majors or they would have opened 1♥. They would have to be at least 5-4 and will rebid hearts after your response of a minor. So if you have a 4-4 fit, you will always find it, even if you don't bid the hearts yourself.

Therefore, 2♥ shows five hearts because:

- ♣ you don't need it to show four hearts and
- ♣ you want to make sure you find your 5-3 heart fits.

If you only have four hearts, you should respond with a minor. If you have one minor, your decision

is easy: bid the one you have! If you have both minors (1·4·4·4-shape), bid the lower of the 4-card suits as usual – respond 2♣.

But what if you have 3·4·3·3 shape?

- ♣ You can't bid 3♠ because you only have 3-card support for spades, and partner may have only four of them.
- ♣ You can't bid 2♥ because you only have four of them and that would show 5+.

You therefore have to bid a 3-card minor! You should bid 2♣ rather than 2♦, for two reasons:

- ♣ First, it means that it is *only* 2♣ which potentially contains a 3-card suit
- ♣ Second, it keeps the bidding lower.

You may be concerned that partner might raise 2♣ to 3♣ with four clubs, expecting to have an eight-card fit; yes, they will but that's not actually a concern at all! Remember that if partner is supporting your minor, his shape will be unbalanced and therefore 5♠-4♣. You will therefore be able to convert to your spade fit and partner will never insist on the minor when you have a known major fit.

From this, we can slightly modify opener's expectations of the number of cards promised by partner's 2-level response to specifically a 1♠ opening: although 2♦ promises four as usual, 2♥ promises five and 2♣ may be only three (but rarely). □

**Have you got it? India's quiz, including a revision of responding with a poor hand, is online page 68**

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## Setting up a side suit ~ 3

We continue the theme of setting up dummy's long side suit in a trump contract. As ever in this type of deal, entries are all-important. Let's start with an example where you have to be careful with your entries to dummy.

You end up in this first deal as South in 4♥ after West has bid spades. West cashes the ace-king of his suit and switches to the ♠K. How should you continue?

**Hand 1**  
South plays in 4♥.  
West leads the ♠A.

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

Your *Count and Plan* reveals nine top tricks in the guise of five hearts, three diamonds and the ♠A. Note, though, that the diamond suit is blocked, so a 4-1 trump break may make it impossible to draw trumps and get to cash the ♦Q. This club switch at trick three has inconveniently removed an entry to dummy.

Sure, diamonds may break 3-3 and trumps 3-2 and, equally, you may receive a large income tax rebate in the post tomorrow. Best is to assume normal breaks – trumps 3-2 and diamonds 4-2. How might you make the hand now?

The answer is to take the ♠A at trick three, cash the ♦AK and play two rounds of trumps with the ♥K and the ♥Q. Now in dummy you ruff a low diamond in hand to set the suit up and are almost home and dry. A trump to the table allows you to draw the last heart and access the ♦Q 7, which are

your ninth and tenth tricks. Here's the full deal:

South plays 4♥. West leads the ♠A			
♠	Q J		<a href="#">Online readers can click here</a>
♥	A Q 3		
♦	Q 7 6 4 3		
♣	A 5 3		
♠	A K 10 7 4 2	♠	9 8 6
♥	8 6	♥	7 4 2
♦	10 2	♦	J 9 8 5
♣	K Q J	♣	9 7 6
♠	5 3		
♥	K J 10 9 5		
♦	A K		
♣	10 8 4 2		

Ten tricks come from five hearts, four diamonds and the ♠A.

Now, how might you handle your entries in this next one? You open 4♠ as dealer and this wins the coconut as all pass. West tries to cash the ♥AK and you have to decide how to play the hand. Any ideas?

**Hand 2**  
South plays in 4♠.  
West leads the ♥A followed by the ♥K.

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

Your *Count and Plan* reveals nine easy tricks (eight spades and the ♦A) but the tenth seems elusive. West can hardly have started with the ♥AK and the ♣AK, so you have three club losers to go

with your heart loser. How might you generate an extra winner?

Too many players would draw a round or two of trumps before thinking about the hand – and in this case that would be fatal. You need to ruff out the diamonds and you need to access the last, winning, diamond. To that end, you need three entries in dummy, and they are the 10 9 5 of trumps.

Bearing that in mind, you must keep one of your low trumps in hand so you can overtake it to reach the dummy. You may have ruffed the second heart with the ♠2, something you can (just) afford as you still retain the ♠4, which is lower than the ♠5.

Thus, the right line of play is to ruff the second round of hearts at trick two, play the ♦A and ruff a diamond with a high trump. Play the ♠7 to the ♠9, ruff a diamond with a high trump. Play the ♠8 to the ♠10, ruff a diamond with a high trump. By ruffing three diamonds in hand, the last diamond in dummy is a winner (assuming, that is, a 4-3 diamond split).

You triumphantly play the ♠4 to the ♠5 and cash your tenth trick. Here's the full deal:

South plays 4♠. West leads the ♥A

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

♠ 6 3  
♥ J 9 6 5 3  
♦ K 10 2  
♣ A K 3

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

♠ A K Q J 8 7 4 2  
♥ 10  
♦ J  
♣ 10 7 4

Online readers can click here

This deal is one of the many reasons why we advocate Counting and Planning before playing a card. How many contracts are wrecked early in the piece by poor planning? How many declarers in your acquaintance have said, ‘I could have made that, but I...’.

I'll leave the rest unsaid. □

Have you got it? Paul's quiz is online p70

AA

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# New Prize Leads Quiz

by Alan Mould

**R**emember that with the new format, if you think it matters you need to specify which card of a suit you are leading.

To help you with your leads, it will be assumed that we play top from a sequence, top from a doubleton, second from three or more small cards and fourth highest from an honour, unless there's a good reason to make a non-standard lead.

## COMPUTER LEADS

Alan Mould has teamed up with Nathan Piper to get computer-generated simulations to provide best lead scenarios. Details on methodology can be seen by [clicking here](#).



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Entries to the Editor, Leads Quiz,  
Raggett House, Bowdens, Langport, Somerset,  
TA10 0DD

or e-mail [lou@ebu.co.uk](mailto:lou@ebu.co.uk)

by 3 January 2023.

Please include your full postal address AND rank even if entering by e-mail

**ANSWERS TO SEPTEMBER'S QUIZ: page 52**

## TWO answers - Teams & Pairs

### Hand 1

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

South	West	North	East
1NT <sup>1</sup>	Pass	3NT	Pass
<sup>1</sup> 12-14			All Pass

What is your lead playing teams and, playing pairs?

\* \* \* \* \*

### Hand 2

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

South	West	North	East
1♠ 4♠	Pass All Pass	2♠ <sup>1</sup>	Pass Dble
<sup>1</sup> 8-10 with three spades			

What is your lead playing teams and, playing pairs?

\* \* \* \* \*

### Hand 3

♠ Q 10 7 5  
♥ A 10 2  
♦ A 10 9 2  
♣ Q 6

South	West	North	East
1♦ 1NT <sup>1</sup>	Pass All Pass	1♠	Pass
<sup>1</sup> 15-17 rebid			

What is your lead playing teams and, playing pairs?





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# Beat Today's Experts

These hands are all from modern events and David Bird points to some useful lessons to be learned from them. Bid them with your partner and then see how your efforts compare with the experts' bidding.

## DECEMBER 2023 WEST HANDS

(IMP scoring on every deal)

1. E/W Game                    ♠ K 9 8 5  
Dealer South                ♥ K 5 3  
                                      ♦ 5  
(Percario)                   ♣ A K Q 9 5  
\* South passes
2. E/W Game                    ♠ K 8 7 4  
Dealer West                 ♥ 4  
                                      ♦ A K 10 5 3  
(Martel)                    ♣ 10 5 3  
\* North calls 1♥ if available
3. Game All                    ♠ A K J 7 3  
Dealer West                 ♥ 2  
                                      ♦ A Q J 7  
(J. Liu)                      ♣ Q 5 3
4. Game All                    ♠ Q 3  
Dealer East                 ♥ 3  
                                      ♦ K J 10 6 4  
(Harding)                 ♣ A 5 4 3 2
5. N/S Game                    ♠ K 10 9 8  
Dealer East                 ♥ 9 5 3  
                                      ♦ Q 8 2  
(Y. Johansson)           ♣ K 7 6  
\* South calls 1♥ if available
6. N/S Game                    ♠ A Q 10  
Dealer South               ♥ A J  
                                      ♦ A K 10 2  
(Huang)                   ♣ K 10 8 7  
\* South passes

Did you beat the experts? – page 43

# Beat Today's Experts

These hands are all from modern events and David Bird points to some useful lessons to be learned from them. Bid them with your partner and then see how your efforts compare with the experts' bidding.

## DECEMBER 2023 EAST HANDS

(IMP scoring on every deal)

1. E/W Game                    ♠ J 7 4 3  
Dealer South               ♥ Q J 8  
                                      ♦ A 10 9 6 4  
(Donati)                   ♣ 10  
\* South passes
2. E/W Game                    ♠ A Q J 9 3  
Dealer West                 ♥ A K 10 3  
                                      ♦ Q  
(Fleisher)                 ♣ A 6 2  
\* North calls 1♥ if available
3. Game All                    ♠ Q 6 5 2  
Dealer West                 ♥ J 10 7 3  
                                      ♦ K 8 4  
(Zhuang)                   ♣ A 6
4. Game All                    ♠ A 9 7 6  
Dealer East                 ♥ A K 10 9 8  
                                      ♦ Q 7 5  
(Fuglestad)               ♣ Q
5. N/S Game                    ♠ A Q J 7  
Dealer East                 ♥ A 7  
                                      ♦ A 10 7 6 4  
(L. Johansson)           ♣ J 2  
\* South calls 1♥ if available
6. N/S Game                    ♠ K J 8 7 6 2  
Dealer South               ♥ K 4 3  
                                      ♦ 3  
(Ran)                      ♣ A J 6  
\* South passes

Did you beat the experts? – page 43

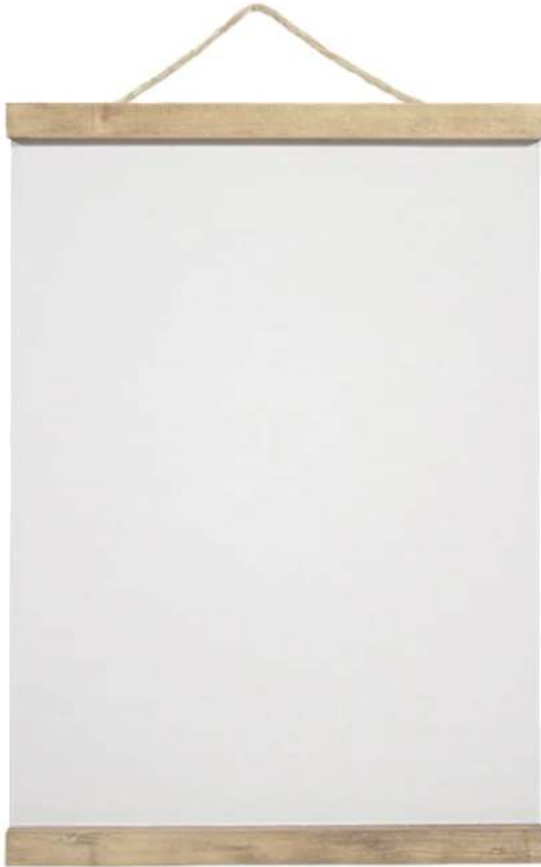
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**B**ridge is a fantastic game in every respect but one: it is not photogenic. A picture of people sitting round tables and looking intently at cards tends not to make a compelling image that invites people to join in. The key issue perhaps is that the interest of a bridge game is all in the things that you cannot easily see – the tension of a contested auction, the agonising over whether to play East or West for the missing queen of hearts, the joy of making a difficult three no trumps or a marginal small slam.

However, images are key to promoting bridge. Every social media post, web article or printed leaflet needs an image to go with it, and preferably one that will draw people in. We want people to see the picture and think, ‘that looks fun’, or ‘interesting’, or something they would like to be involved with.

We also need to be inclusive in our imagery. We resist images that tend to confirm stereotypes about



bridge and the kind of people that play the game. We like images that convey colour, emotion and good humour. We also like images that are effective in a variety of sizes, possibly cropped to fit other content.

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## James Fletcher's Debut

The school duplicate was into its eighth round as two new boys arrived at the Headmaster's table.

Norma Doulton, who liked to encourage those just starting the game, delivered a welcoming smile. 'I see you boys did well last week,' she said. 'You were one place ahead of the Headmaster and me.'

James Fletcher looked back nervously. 'We didn't mean to be, Mrs Doulton,' he replied. 'We had a few lucky ones.'

With no great liking for small talk, nor the direction it was currently taking, the Headmaster beckoned for the next board to be played:

**E/W Game. Dealer South.**

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

West	North	East	South
Simon Archer	The Headmaster	James Fletcher	Norma Doulton
Pass	1♥	Pass	1NT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

Simon Archer, who barely looked old enough to be in the Senior School, led the ♠2. 'Seven, please,' said Mrs Doulton.

James Fletcher produced the ♠9, declarer winning with the jack. When she turned to clubs, leading the ten, East took his ace immediately. He then cashed the spade ace, and continued with the ♠4. Simon Archer scored two tricks with his ♠K8, East discarding the ♦10 on the fourth round. The ensuing diamond switch to the ace took the game one down.

The Headmaster, who had missed the play while making some entry in his diary, looked up. 'That was quick, Norma' he observed. 'How many did you make.'

'One down, I'm afraid,' his wife replied.

Wishing that he had watched the proceedings, the Headmaster reached for the scoresheet. 'What went wrong, then?' he continued. 'Everyone else made it, on a spade lead. Did they lead something different?'

'No, no,' his wife replied. 'The boy here found a nice defence, putting in the nine at trick one. I expect the others won with the ace.'

'Perhaps it was the wrong play,' said Fletcher apologetically. 'I thought I needed to keep my ace to deal with dummy's 10. After partner's lead of the 2, I knew Mrs Doulton had four spades.'

'It was an excellent play, Fletcher,' Norma said. 'If you win the first trick with the ace, I must make two tricks from the queen, jack and 10.'

A few rounds later, with some trepidation, the two youngsters took their seats to face Bertie Bellis and Percy Cutforth.

'We'll need to be on top form against this pair, Percy,' announced Bertie Bellis. 'They did rather well last week.'

The senior physics master feigned a serious expression. 'I'll try my best, partner,' he said.

This was the deal before them:

**Love All. Dealer South.**

♠ 9 6

♥ A K 10 6 2

♦ A Q 9

♣ 7 6 2

♠ K 5

♥ Q J 9 7 3

♦ 8 5 3 2

♣ K 3

♠ Q J 8 4 3 2

♥ 8 4

♦ 10 7 6

♣ Q 8

♠ A 10 7

♥ 5

♦ K J 4

♣ A J 10 9 5 4

West	North	East	South
Bertie	Simon	Percy	James
Bellis	Archer	Cutforth	Fletcher
2♠	3♥	Pass	1♣
All Pass			3NT

The ♠4 was led, East winning with the king, On the ♠5 return, Fletcher played the 10 and West won with the jack. When the ♠2 was played back, Percy Cutforth was quick to dispose of his ♣K.

Somewhat surprised by the appearance of this high card, the young declarer won with the spade ace. With only seven top tricks available, he would have to play on clubs. Finessing into the danger hand was not attractive, so he played ace and another club. Bertie Bellis won with the queen and cashed three more spade tricks for two down.

A slightly bemused Fletcher turned towards Percy Cutforth. ‘If you don’t throw the king of clubs away, I make it,’ he observed. ‘I can lead a club towards my hand, ducking if the king appears.’

‘It was a cost-nothing discard,’ came the reply. ‘If you had the ace-queen, my king was dead anyway. Meanwhile, I might create an entry for partner’s doubleton queen.’

Bertie Bellis nodded his agreement. ‘Or three cards to the jack,’ he added.

Simon Archer studied the result sheet. ‘Only one other pair went down,’ he reported. ‘Just our luck to play the deal at this table!’

The two masters shared a glance, but made no further comment. James Fletcher was quick to pick this up. ‘Could I have made it, then?’ he asked.

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Bertie Bellis nodded. ‘You have to win the second spade, to stop my partner getting a discard,’ he replied. ‘Unlike you boys, we old-timers tend to have six cards for a weak jump overcall. A second hold-up isn’t necessary then.’

The disconsolate declarer scribbled the result in his scorecard. ‘I should have spotted it, partner, sorry. Mr. Cutforth’s clever discard never occurred to me.’

‘No worries,’ his partner replied. ‘You’d have made it against any other pair!’ □

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## Coping with pre-empts ~ Part 1

Part of competitive bridge is getting used to the opponents making your life difficult by opening pre-empts. Although at first it can seem daunting to have to make your initial entry at the three level or higher, in time you will become familiar with starting off at a high level, and can use the knowledge of your opponents' opening bids against them!

### THE OPPONENTS OPEN AT THE THREE LEVEL

Although you have exactly the same tools available to you after a pre-empt as after a 1-level opening, the way in which you apply them might be completely different.

Imagine that (with neither side vulnerable) your right hand opponent opens 3♦ – what do you say with each of these hands?

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3
♠ Q 10 7 2 ♥ K 9 5 ♦ Q 9 2 ♣ A Q 3	♠ K Q 9 3 ♥ A Q 8 3 2 ♦ 2 ♣ K J 4	♠ Q ♥ Q J 5 ♦ A J ♣ A K J 8 5 3 2
Hand 4	Hand 5	
♠ A Q 2 ♥ K Q 9 3 ♦ A K J 3 ♣ K 6	♠ J 9 8 4 3 2 ♥ A K J 7 4 ♦ – ♣ A 5	

**Hand 1** has 13 points and the ♦Q92 is worth a little more sitting over a pre-empt than it was a moment ago. Nevertheless the right bid is pass, as you have nothing that you can seriously consider doing.

While I am a strong advocate of doubling minors for takeout when holding sound balanced openings (and indeed I would have doubled 1♦ without a second thought) if you take any action on this hand you won't survive unless partner holds good values, and if that's the case he will normally take you too high.

**Hand 2** has enough shape and values to warrant an entry into the auction but should we overcall or double? Had the opening bid been 1♦ then it makes a lot of sense to overcall 1♥, planning to double for takeout at your next go if partner is unresponsive.

Once again we must change our action, as you will only get one bite at the cherry, and double is the more flexible call. This isn't simply to avoid missing game, it's more because bidding 3♥ puts all of our eggs into the heart basket, whereas double caters for finding a spade fit, finding a club fit or partner being able to pass for penalties. If 3NT is the right contract then probably we will find it regardless of whether we bid 3♥ or double.

**Hand 3** has a long club suit, and it might seem obvious to bid those, but at times like these it is a good idea to recall the noble bard. *In 3NT doth a long minor suit oft belong* (Henry IV part II, scene 3) (*methinks he doth jest – Ed*).

3NT carries a huge risk of course, firstly that the spades might be wide open, but secondly if the clubs don't run then we only have one diamond stopper, and might go several off. Despite this we must bite the bullet and bid it, hoping to find a smattering of points with partner and a little luck. If partner has as little as

♠J9xxx ♥Kxx ♦10xx ♣xx

then we have a fighting chance, and that's all we need to justify bidding it.

Another way of looking at it is to assume that the action you are about to choose is going to work well, and see what reward you get. If you bid 4♣ and this is the right thing to do (partner having a few clubs and a weak hand) then all you get is a feeble 130 for your troubles. If you bid 3NT and make it you get a nice juicy game bonus!

**Hand 4** has lots of points and again, while we would have doubled a 1♦ opener then jumped in NT to show our strength, we do not have the space to do so. We must simply shut our eyes and

bid 3NT. The trouble with doubling is that partner may bid 4♣ and we have gone past our most likely game. 3NT might not result in the ‘contract beautiful’, but at least it will avoid the ‘auction horrible’ one where we start looking for a fit at the four level, not knowing if we belong in game, slam or partscore!

**Hand 5** finally offers the chance to make the same bid after a pre-empt as we would have done after a 1-level opener. Had 1♦ been opened to our right we would have bid 2♦ for the majors, and now we can do the same. 4♦ will force us to game of course, but that doesn’t mean it shows the earth, just the belief that ten tricks may be on the agenda and we want partner to pick a major suit. (After a three of a minor pre-empt, the cue bid shows both majors, the most important suits you need to get into the action. If you find yourself with a two-suiter with clubs and a major, it is normally right to bid the major and hope to find a fit there).

**WHAT HAVE YOU GOT PARTNER?**

One of the recurring features of bidding against a pre-empt is that you will often have to place partner with some values, and the normal amount you are entitled to expect is about seven or eight points. The logic behind this is that the pre-emptor will have about 5-9, you have an opening hand so the other two players will have about half the pack between them, and while partner will sometimes have more than the pre-emptor’s partner, you must cater for them having a little less.

What features can we glean about actions taken after a pre-emptive auction as opposed to a traditional one that starts at the one level?

A takeout double must be ‘shape suitable’, with shortage in the opponent’s pre-emptive suit (a doubleton is alright, but a singleton much better) and sound opening values. You must have support for the unbid major suits. If you have a doubleton in one of the minors you can often get away with it.

Note that one of the features of doubling pre-empts for takeout is that it will frequently be right for partner to pass, not necessarily as part of a ‘get rich quick’ scheme, but more because the alternative is too costly!

Since everyone plays penalty doubles after their partner has opened a pre-empt (there is no point doubling for takeout when partner has told you

they have a 7-card suit and nothing else!) you have to be careful that taking the ‘safe option’ of removing partner’s double to a 4-card suit may turn into disaster if they start doubling and you are in 4-3 fit.

Imagine you have these three hands and partner doubles a 3♦ opener, as we saw above:

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

In each case the cheapest option will normally be to pass the double. You hope for the contract to go off, but even if it doesn’t -470 is likely to be cheaper than -500, -800 or even worse when doubled.

Compare this to the one level: if partner doubled 1♦ for take out we wouldn’t dream if passing on any of these hands, bidding 1NT, 2♣ and 1♠ respectively, which will normally keep us out of harm.

Sadly we no longer have that option and trying for a small plus score in defence is the best gamble.

**The Dos and Don’ts of defending against 3-level pre-empts**

**Do** remember that you have exactly the same tools available at the three level as you do at the one level, but you may need to use them slightly differently.

**Do** bid boldly on the assumption that partner has a few values for you, and choose the action which has the biggest upside.

**Don’t** overbid when you have balanced hands, even if you were going to open the bidding yourself or make a light take out double had the opening bid been at the one level.

**Don’t** be afraid to make a thin penalty pass if you can see no other winning option. A pre-empt often goes one or two down when you have some length in the enemy suit, which is much easier than trying to manage the play in a 4-3 fit at the four level with half the deck between you! □

**TRY MICHAEL’S QUIZ, ONLINE PAGE 67**





## Suit Preference

Suit preference is one of the most important parts of bridge. It's especially important while playing at the rather smart Portland club – when you need to look your best. Jokes aside, suit preference isn't the most important part of bridge, but it is very helpful in certain situations.

Suit preference (also known as McKenney) is a type of signalling method in defence, similar to count or attitude – but also different in a very key way. While attitude tells partner if you like the suit being played and count tells partner how many cards you have in the suit being played, suit preference tells partner about an entirely different suit.

The concept is simple enough: If partner plays a high spot card, they are showing interest in the higher-ranking of the other suits. If he plays a low spot card, he is showing interest in the lower of the other suits.

Let's say you are defending a spade contract and your partner played the ♣3 in a situation where you agreed to play suit preference. Since this is a low

club, it would be asking for a diamond. If partner played the ♠8 (a high club), it would be asking for a heart.

Like I said: simple enough. But this still leaves us with the question of when to play suit preference. Some people play suit preference discards (rather than attitude or count discards), but I'm not about to suggest such a radical change to your system. Instead, let's take a look at how you can incorporate suit preference into your existing game.

The most classic of examples is when you're looking for a ruff. Have a look at Hand 1.

You begin confidently with a lead of your singleton club. Your partner goes up with the ace and returns the ♠9 for you to ruff.

Flushed with success, you turn your attention on what to play at trick three. Ideally having scored one ruff you would like to score another. The best way to do that (and to beat the contract) is to find partner with a second ace. Let's see which ace partner has...

What club did partner play at trick two? If you weren't paying attention, it will probably take the shape of one of those pesky question marks. But if you were paying attention, it will take the shape of cash symbols. This is the first instance when you should be playing suit preference: *when giving partner a ruff.*

If partner played the ♠2, it is clearly showing interest in the lower of the other suits (excluding trumps). That would be diamonds and, with the king in dummy, partner must have the ace. As it is, partner returned the ♣9, which is clearly asking for the higher of the other suits (in this case, hearts). It could be the ace or the king, but you aren't going to get a ruff unless you play the suit. Play back a heart, and here, partner rises with the ace, playing back another club for you to ruff.

If you think along these lines, you can employ suit preference in all sorts of situations. As it happens, suit preference isn't just useful when *you* have a

**Hand 1**

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

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

♠ K 10 9 8 4  
♥ ? 10 3  
♦ ? 5  
♣ K J 10

♠ 7  
♥ ? 9 6  
♦ ? 6 4 2  
♣ A 9 7 6 2

Online  
readers  
can click  
here

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	3NT <sup>1</sup>	Pass
4♣	All Pass		


<sup>1</sup> 12-14 balanced with four spades

club losers will disappear with the aid of a ruffing diamond finesse or on dummy's fourth spade.

That, of course, doesn't mean we should blindly switch to a club:

♠ 7 6 3 2  
♥ AK J 10 5  
♦ 5  
♣ 9 7 6

♠ 10 9 5  
♥ 9 6  
♦ AK 8 7 2  
♣ K 8 2



South	West	North	East
1NT <sup>1</sup>	Pass	2♣ <sup>2</sup>	Pass
2♥	Pass	4♥	All Pass

<sup>1</sup> 15-17, <sup>2</sup> Stayman

You begin the defence confidently with the ♦A, and dummy goes down with a flourish. Dummy's singleton diamond is a disappointment, one that turns your two lovely diamond tricks into only one. Worse – it leaves you with a decision at trick two.

Continuing diamonds doesn't look particularly appealing, so we must turn to the other suits. We could switch to a passive trump, to an aggressive club, or to a spade which is somewhere in the middle. Let's think about some of the hands declarer could have:

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

If declarer holds Hand 2, we must switch to a low club. Partner wins with the ace and leads back the ♣J, allowing the defence to score the first four tricks. If we switch to anything else, one of declarer's

**Hand 3**

♠ 10 9 5

♥ 9 6

♦ AK 8 7 2

♣ K 8 2



♠ AK 8

♥ 7 2

♦ 9 6 4 3

♣ 10 5 4 3

♠ Q J 4

♥ Q 8 4 3

♦ Q J 10

♣ A Q J

Online readers can click here

Now a club switch is calamitous. With a club trick in the bag, declarer will again rely on the ruffing diamond finesse to dispatch his one losing club, and the favourable layout of the spades will leave declarer with three losers and a making contract.

So, intrepid reader of mine, I leave you with the question: which of these hands is more likely, and these are only two among many possibilities?

You may think that such calculations are best left to the experts, the kind that always get these guesses right. But, the best bridge players aren't the best because they can figure out which of these hands is more likely. They're best because they don't have to.

To find the right switch, all you need to do is look at partner's card at trick one.

When the singleton came down in dummy, continuing diamonds isn't a consideration. Partner is aware of this too. ***When partner doesn't care about attitude or count and is looking for a switch: give suit preference.***

On this hand East will play a low diamond with a holding in clubs (Hand 2), and a high diamond if he has a holding in spades (Hand 3). You'll beat the contract whenever it can be beaten, and you won't need to worry about the rest of the hand.

Like I said: simple enough.



## Agatha Christie plays bridge

**T**he period between the two world wars is known as the 'Golden Age' of detective fiction. It was also the golden age of bridge.

Most of Agatha Christie's stories were set in an upper or upper-middle class world, so one would expect frequent mentions of bridge. Janet Morgan's 1986 biography of Christie contains many references to Christie playing bridge, and not just informal kitchen bridge with family and friends; for example: *'Agatha played golf and bridge with local ladies'* in New Zealand. After being found in a hotel in Harrogate (where she had gone anonymously after some sort of break-down), she *'remembered playing bridge with her fellow-guests and discussing the disappearance of the missing novelist.'*

A Christie fan website lists ten of her works that contain references to bridge, and I have studied them to see what we can learn about how bridge was played at the time – at least according to Christie. There may be other mentions of bridge in her writing – you didn't expect me to read all 66 novels, 15 collections of short stories and over 20 plays from cover to cover, did you? If you come across any other mentions, please let me know.

I should warn you that, although I have tried not to give away significant bits of the plot, some of the details may spoil your future enjoyment of the relevant stories.



In seven of the ten works the bridge is irrelevant to the story, so let's get those out of the way.

**The Seven Dials Mystery** is a full-length novel, published in 1929. It was described by one as 'John Buchan meets P G Wodehouse'. It was poorly reviewed and bridge plays no significant part.

**A Christmas Tragedy** is a 1930 Miss Marple short story in which Mrs Sanders is summoned

home early from a bridge afternoon and then murdered. This could explain why so many bridge players are reluctant to stop playing and go home. Other than that, there is no bridge content, but I noted one of the characters saying *'But I negatived that idea.'*

**Problem at Sea** (1936) is a Poirot short story, set on a sea voyage to Egypt. Once again the murder victim is a bridge-playing woman. Christie only makes one comment about the game: *'Poirot noticed that Mrs Clapperton said No Bid to her initial bid of Two Clubs.'* This may seem sacrilegious to modern players, but I am told that 2♣ was played as strong but not forcing in the '30s. Why Christie chose to give us this snippet and not refer back to it, I have no idea.

**The Incredible Theft** is a short story from 1937. The characters play bridge after dinner, but the bridge has no bearing on the plot. It does contain one character saying to another: *'That was a frightfully clever four no-trump call of yours.'* No-one has ever said that to me, especially not *'an extremely good-looking blonde whose voice held a soupçon of an American accent'*.

**Death on the Nile** (1937) is a major novel (and later a film), with Hercule Poirot on a cruise up the Nile. Some of the passengers play bridge, but that is merely incidental.

**Four and Twenty Blackbirds** is a not very good, in my opinion, 1940 Poirot short story about a restaurant, an impersonation and an alibi at Wimbledon Bridge Club. I am a member of the current incarnation of Wimbledon Bridge Club, which was founded in the early '80s. I am assured that there are no murderers in the current membership.

**The Body in the Library** (1941) has a convoluted plot about two young women ('girls,' in Christie-speak) who are dance and bridge hostesses at the Majestic. *'It's a good job,'* we learn, *'well paid and pleasant to do.'* We are also told that *'... bridge is a touchy sort of game.'* Bridge seems to be used (I got bored) as some sort of alibi for one or more suspects, but there were no details of interest.



Now on to the main three – one short story, one full-length novel and one play.

**The King of Clubs** is an Hercule Poirot short story, first published in 1923. A family of four are playing bridge when *'... the french (sic) window bursts open, and a woman staggers into the room. Her grey satin frock is marked with a crimson stain. She utters one word, 'Murder!' before she sinks to the ground insensible.'*

Poirot is soon on the scene and interviews the bridge players. The daughter says they had played several rubbers. She also says she was facing the window and *'had gone one no trump'* before the interruption. Later Poirot suggests to the mother that it was she, the mother, who was facing the window, and she doesn't correct him.

Then Poirot examines the cards on the table and says to Captain Hastings: *'I think Miss Oglander made a mistake in going one no trump. She should have gone three spades.'* He also notices that the king of clubs is missing; it is still in the box.

So, that's three clues that the bridge game was set up to provide an alibi for one or more of the players, and three clues are more than enough for anyone with little grey cells. Christie fans who don't understand that there is a significant difference between bidding one no trump and three spades, or who think that bridge is played with 51 cards, will still have the contradictory statements about who was sitting where to guide them to the solution.

What have we learned? That the adjective 'French' was not always capitalised in those days.

**Cards on the Table** was published in the UK in 1936, and in the US a year later. It was Christie's twentieth novel, and the eleventh featuring Poirot.

The plot centres on four people, each of whom is believed to have got away with a murder. They have been invited to a game of bridge and play together while their host rests in a chair by the fire. Meanwhile, next door, Poirot and three other

'sleuths' are also playing bridge. At some time during the evening the host is stabbed with a stiletto, and only one of the suspect four could have done it.

I found the concept – that the murderer could be identified by their bridge tactics and mannerisms, such as the way they filled out their scorecard – a little contrived. Nevertheless, the book was well reviewed – 'ingenious', 'simple but brilliant', and so on.

The critical deal is described by one of the players a couple of days later (what a memory!): *'He bid an original two spades, I gave him three diamonds, he bid four no-trumps, I bid five spades and he suddenly jumped to seven diamonds. We were doubled, of course. If the others had led a heart we would have been three tricks down. As it was they led the king of clubs and we got it.'*

West	East
2♠	3♦
4NT	5♠
7♦	(Dble)

The opening 2♠ bid was forcing; we know that because the bidder had said *'I'm a forcing two.'* as the cards were shuffled at the beginning of the game. Christie doesn't explain the 4NT bid. If they were playing strong twos and Blackwood, then perhaps you could construct an opening hand with a very good spade suit and good diamond support. But Blackwood was only 'invented' in 1933, so is unlikely to have filtered down to Christie's level of social bridge by 1935-36. Anyway, the grand slam was off an ace, or some other combination of three tricks, which makes the bidding a little foolish.

The explanation behind the implausible auction is that responder wanted to bid up to an exciting high-level contract. That would keep the other three players focused on the bridge while he/she (not telling you) murdered the host, who was dozing by the fire. The contract being played at the time the body was discovered (the four sleuths have come to say goodnight to their host) is even more implausible – 5NT, Doubled!

I noted that Christie had two of her characters give five-digit telephone numbers with London exchanges. That was incorrect; numbers were always four digits in those days, but no doubt she was protecting some blameless person from getting nuisance calls.

*Cont/...*



**Spider's Web** is a play from 1954. It was written for Margaret Lockwood, a well-known film star who had never appeared on stage. It opened to mixed reviews from the critics, but it had the second-longest first run of any Christie play, beaten only by *The Mousetrap*.

Four characters conspire to deceive the police by pretending they were playing bridge – an alibi arranged after the discovery of a body, as opposed to *The King of Clubs*, where the alibi was arranged before the murder.

In one scene, the main character is described preparing a marker (apparently another name for a scorecard) as evidence of the game. *‘Standing at the table, Clarissa scribbled figures on one of the markers. ‘Three spades, four hearts, four no trumps, pass,’ she muttered pointing at each hand as she made its call. ‘Five diamonds, pass six spades – double – and I think they go down.’ She paused for a moment, looking down at the table, and then continued, ‘Let me see, doubled vulnerable, two tricks, five hundred – or shall I let them make it? No.’*

I don't understand this. Surely she should only be concerned about putting the relevant information, in this case 500, onto the scorecard. Why does she, under time pressure, need to reconstruct the bidding? And the auction in all its glory was:

which is even more bizarre than the one in *Cards on the Table*. This time responder's use of 4NT is quite

West	North	East	South
	3♠	4♥	4NT
Pass	5♦	Pass	6♠
Dble	All Pass		

possibly Blackwood, by now a 20 year old convention. But to bid to a failing vulnerable slam (when you are not deliberately trying to distract the other players), seems a little over the top.

How puzzling that Christie, a regular bridge player, should do bridge such a disservice. Surely a writer of her standing could have consulted a bridge expert and obtained some plausible sequences? We know that Christie used a knowledge of potions and poisons in her novels, gained from her time in hospital pharmacies during the First and Second World Wars. I hope her use of such information was both accurate and responsible. Dorothy L Sayers was made a vice-president of the 'bell ringers' association for her accurate portrayal of

campanology in *The Nine Tailors*. I don't think Agatha Christie's knowledge of bridge earned her any plaudits in the bridge world.

Back to the plot.

The police inspector arrives and sees the bridge table, with the single scorecard showing two completed rubbers and the beginnings of a third.

*‘I am fond of a game of bridge myself.’*

*‘Oh, are you?’ Clarissa replied. ‘Do you play Blackwood?’* (Ah-ha! So Blackwood was known about in Agatha-Clarissa circles in 1954. And trendy enough to get a mention.)

In an echo of *The King of Clubs*, written 31 years earlier, a card (the ace of spades this time) is discovered under the sofa. That, combined with the solitary scorecard, is enough for the inspector to believe that some sort of cover-up is going on.

(You can find a 1982 TV version of *Spider's Web*, starring Penelope Keith, on the internet.)



As a postscript, we return to *Cards on the Table*.

Re-reading the whole book (I enjoyed her use of the adjective 'no-trumper' to describe contracts), and seeing the TV film again, I was reminded of how much of the story had been changed. There is a character who dies in the book but not in the film, and one who dies in the film but not in the book. A parent-child connection is revealed in the film, as are gay and lesbian relationships, none of which Christie included, or even hinted at. I don't think any of the changes made the film better than the book, but maybe it made it longer, enough to fill the two hour television slot.

In 2005 I was lucky enough to be the bridge adviser on the set during the filming of the TV version, with David Suchet as Poirot.

The filming of the bridge party (and the murder) was in a wonderful set representing a luxurious flat, and took four days. I wasn't needed on the first morning and was sent to the director's trailer to read the script for the bridge party. I suggested a couple of small changes to obscure 1930s bridge terminology; the general public weren't going to understand the expressions anyway, but at least they should mean something to bridge players. The only bridge error that crept into the film (and it wasn't in the bit that I proof-read!) was a character saying 'He went down 30.'

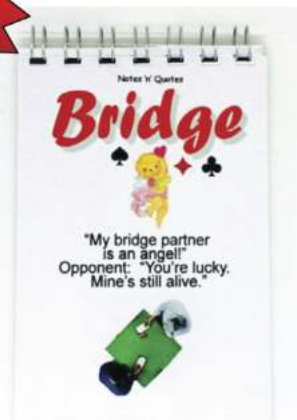


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## Clever play

**N/S Game. Dlr South**

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

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

W	N	E	S
Pass	4♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	5♠	Pass	4NT
All Pass			

Playing pairs, you open 1♠ with the South cards, preferring a major over a minor with two four-card suits and points outside your 1NT range. What do you respond with the North cards?

Bid 4♥, a splinter agreeing spades and showing shortage. How do you proceed with the South cards?

You have a tough problem. You have extra values and your heart holding is ideal facing a shortage, however you have no convenient cuebid to make and 4NT is hardly ideal with a doubleton. Nevertheless I would take a gamble on keycard Blackwood since you also need to know about partner's trumps. Partner responds five spades and you proceed to six with your fingers crossed that there are not two club losers.

The lead is the ♣A on which East contributes the three, and West switches to trumps, the ♠6 which you take with the ♠K, and East contributes the ♠3. How do you plan the play?

Ruffing two hearts in dummy looks to be the best line. However this will only work if trumps divide 3-2, since you cannot afford to ruff with one of your high trumps without promoting a trump for the defence if they break badly. Test the trumps now with a second high trump from dummy. If both defenders follow to this trick, this will leave you with the ace to draw the final round after ruffing your hearts. You can cross to the ace of hearts and ruff a heart. Now cross to a diamond and ruff another heart. You will then need to cross to a second diamond to draw the last remaining trump.

However when West discards on the second round of trumps, you will need a plan B.

This is where you have got to:

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

♠ 6  
♥ 2  
♦ A  
♣ A

♠ 8 3  
♥  
♦ 3  
♣ 3

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

The contract is now looking less good, but is not without hope. You will need your remaining high trumps to draw the last two, so can now only take one ruff. Therefore the last hope is that clubs divide 3-3. Play the king of clubs, and ruff a club. When they divide you can draw a third round of trumps and cross to the ace of diamonds to draw the final trump and cash your winners. The full deal is overleaf:

South plays 6♣. West leads the ♠A

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

### HEATHER'S HINTS

- ❖ Splinter bids will help you to find whether the hands fit well for a slam. Holding just the ace and some small cards, or just small cards in the suit facing a splinter are both good holdings, suggesting that your values are not wasted. On this hand, slam was not that great, as it needed the ace of clubs to be with West and a bit more, but we've all been in worse! However, it had play despite being a combined 28 count with just a 4-4 fit, and that was because the hands fit well, indicated by the good heart holding facing the splinter.
- ❖ When making your plan remember to consider what might go wrong, and whether there is a Plan B? Here, if you had dived straight in with Plan A and ruffed a couple of hearts, you would have failed. Cashing a second top trump from dummy told you that your plan would fail. Fortunately there was a fall back. □

## AGATHA CHRISTIE cont from p26

None of the actors knew anything about bridge. They had already had the mechanics explained to them (holding the cards, bidding clockwise, and playing to tricks), but on set a couple of them wanted specific guidance on bridge matters.

One was having difficulty remembering her lines: 'Three Spades - Five Diamonds - Pass'. We wrote

them down on her scorecard in very faint pencil. It looks as though she is studying her hand before each bid – always a good thing to do!

Another wanted to know how to deliver her lines: 'Pass - No Bid - Double'. I gave her my interpretation of how it might have gone in 1936: Timid - Bored - Firm. The actress was playing a rather mousey character and was perfect in the part. A couple of months later, before *Cards on the Table* was aired, I saw her as a very scantily-clad Cleopatra in the TV series *Rome*; equally perfect – that's acting!

At a break in the filming I was asked to help with a publicity shot of Poirot sitting at a table holding 13 cards, facing a tidy dummy that I had prepared. David Suchet arrived, in costume and in character, and took up his position. He immediately leaned across and straightened dummy's cards.

'Is it you doing that?' I asked him. 'Or Poirot?'

'Poirot is obsessive about such things,' replied David Suchet, with a smile. 'And I am a little bit that way myself.'

One scene called for West to make the opening lead at the end of the auction, and for North to lay out the dummy. You may not realise how difficult it is for a non-bridge player to change the alignment of, say, four cards from part of a fan into a column, and then lay them down on the table. The multi-award-winning actor was unable to do it. I suggested that the lead could be on the table, and three-quarters of the dummy already laid out. Then the actor, with four trumps already arranged as a column in his hand, could put them down. It worked perfectly; the four cards needed to complete the dummy were placed neatly on the right; declarer pulled a card from dummy into the middle of the table, on top of the lead; East contributed his card; and declarer played the ace. At this point West, who knew that everyone had to play a card to a trick, now followed suit. (In his defence, he hadn't played a card to the trick; the lead had been made for him in advance.) South picked up the five cards, tapped them into a completed trick, and placed them in front of her.

'Cut!' cried the director. 'That was good.'

And so I did what I always do when there has been an infraction at the table; I put my hand up and called 'Director!' □



# Great Bridge Disasters

by David Burn



## A clear blue sky

The National Teams League is an online tournament that the EBU runs from time to time. Every league match involves several teams all playing the same boards, so that one can compare results across the field. This deal from an NTL match was yet another example of the fact that disaster can strike from a clear blue sky – you would not think much could go wrong when the high-card points are divided 22-18 and the optimum result is for North-South to score 110 in three diamonds. Or would you?

**E/W Game. Dealer South.**

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

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

Nobody played in 3♦. Curiously enough, the lowest-level contract was reached at the only table where South opened the bidding – his side was using a mini no trump and this was the auction:

West	North	East	South
Pass	2♣ <sup>1</sup>	Dble	1NT
Pass	Redble <sup>2</sup>	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥ <sup>3</sup>	Dble <sup>4</sup>	All Pass

<sup>1</sup> Stayman, <sup>2</sup> Re-Stayman, <sup>3</sup> Not forcing,  
<sup>4</sup> Takeout

I am not quite sure what East was going to do if his partner removed his takeout double into diamonds, but when she passed it seemed likely that a small plus score would accrue. Unfortunately the defence needed to be precise to achieve that, and 470 to North-South was the outcome.

Of 16 results on the deal, 470 was the tenth highest in terms of aggregate score. There were six penalties of 500, split evenly between club contracts by East and heart games by North. One East made 3♣ doubled for 670 his way, and one went three down in 4♣ doubled for 800 the other way. Double dummy enthusiasts will by now have noticed that nine tricks are available in clubs on any lead except a trump; single dummy realists will be unsurprised that no South led one.

And then there was this, which contains lessons for us all.

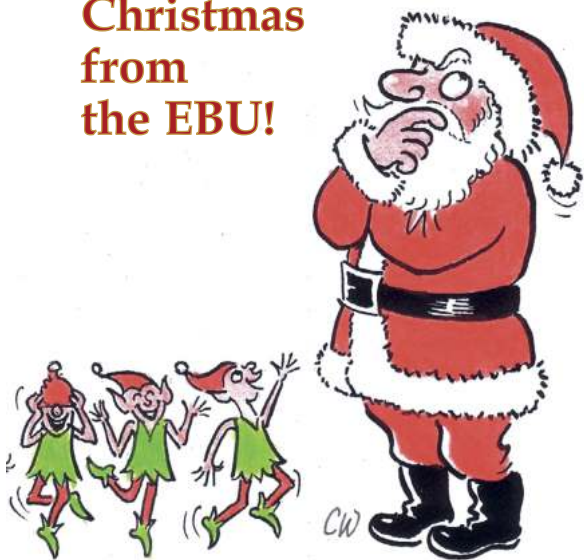
West	North	East	South
Pass	1♥ <sup>1</sup>	1♠	Pass
Pass	3♥ <sup>3</sup>	Dble <sup>4</sup>	2♠ <sup>2</sup>
Pass <sup>6</sup>	Pass	4♣ <sup>7</sup>	Redble <sup>5</sup>
4♣	Dble	All Pass	Dble

<sup>1</sup> Natural, but forcing for one round;  
<sup>2</sup> Sound 3-card heart raise: <sup>3</sup> Cognisant of the fact that on this auction four spades to the queen was a holding that ought to be devalued – those who conceded 500 in 4♥ doubled seemed for some reason to take a different view;  
<sup>4</sup> For takeout – not obvious, but spectacularly well judged until...  
<sup>5</sup> to play, or obtain a penalty – not obvious, and spectacularly poorly judged until... <sup>6</sup> I want to defend 3♥ redoubled – obvious, but... <sup>7</sup> not everyone has discussed this kind of thing.

For a moment North-South were going to concede 300 – not their best, but it was hard for them to bid to 3♦. For another moment they were going to concede 600, which they might have regarded as a nasty setback (an event worse than a disaster but not quite as bad as a catastrophe). In the event, as we have seen so often, disaster struck in an unexpected quarter when East removed 3♥ redoubled to 4♣ and West, misreading his partner's distribution, removed 4♣ doubled to 4♠ doubled and conceded... well, I suppose you could say he conceded the par result of 110 to North-South, with the small addition of a zero on the end.

When it goes one of a suit from the opposition, double by you, redouble by them, pass by your partner, this means 'you got us into this, you get us out of it'. Otherwise, every time it goes something by them, takeout double by you, redouble by them, pass by your partner, this means 'I would have passed them out in something doubled, so you should make the opening lead against something redoubled.' Disasters, as we have seen many times in this series, can happen to anyone. But there are ways to ensure that they happen to the bad guys and not the good. □

**Happy  
Christmas  
from  
the EBU!**



## CARD COMBINATIONS

by Paul Bowyer



**Q** Imagine you are playing in a spade contract, and this is your trump suit. The lead is in dummy and, naturally enough, you play the ♠2 from the North hand

(dummy) towards your hand. When East follows small, what should you do? Play the ♠10 or the ♠Q? The aim is to hold yourself to just one loser; which is the better play and why?

**A.** This may appear to be something of a guess. If East started with ♠Jxx then finessing the ♠10 would be the right play – it would force the king and then the even spade split would allow you to draw the remaining trumps without trouble.

On the other hand, if East started with ♠Kxx then finessing the ♠Q is the winning play. When it holds, you play off the ♠A and another spade and lose just one trick in the suit. Mission accomplished.

Thus, it's a 50-50 shot, right? Finessing the ten is just as good a play as finessing the queen. Not exactly, as we need to look at the 4-2 breaks as well as the 3-3 splits.

If East started with ♠Kx or ♠Jx it doesn't matter what you do. You are destined to succeed no matter whether you finesse the ten or the queen; on the next round the ♠A will fell the remaining honour and you will achieve your goal.

What if East started with ♠Jxxx or ♠Kxxx, however? With the former holding there is nothing you can do. Sure, you may finesse the ten to force the king, but then you can't pick up the remaining ♠Jxx. You are destined by the Great Dealer in the Sky to fail in your objective.

If, though, East started with ♠Kxxx you will succeed by finessing the queen. Now the ace drops the jack, and you can force out the king with the remaining ♠1098, losing just one trick.

If you lay out all the possibilities you will find that finessing the queen works in slightly more layouts than the ten, so is the better play. There are many layouts where it makes no difference, but when it does, the odds favour the queen.

## COMPETITION NEWS

### SENIORS CONGRESS

The Seniors Congress is imminent, taking place from 5th to 7th December, on RealBridge. It is a friendly weekday event for everyone who has played duplicate bridge and was born in 1960 or earlier.

This is an excellent opportunity to try out a green point event from the comfort of your own home. What have you got to lose? Why not give it a try?

If you have not played in an EBU event before you may enjoy either the Swiss Pairs or Swiss Teams. For the Swiss Teams event, you and your partner will need team mates. Swiss events are a special type of competition designed so that you play other players of your own level. The first round you will have a random starting position and could play against anybody else who has entered. However, the result of your first round determines who you play against next. Each round progresses in the same way.

### YEAR END CONGRESS

There is still time to join us between Christmas and New Year for the Year End Congress, 27th - 30th December. It takes place in London at the ILEC, near Earls Court.

**Wednesday** - Stratified Swiss Pairs

**Thursday** - Stratified Swiss Pairs and Jack High Swiss Pairs

**Friday** - Mixed or Open Pairs

**Saturday** - Stratified Swiss Teams and 9-High Improvers Pairs

The venue is just a few minutes' walk from West Brompton station which offers both underground and National Rail services and is only two stops from Clapham Junction. Rooms are available to book at the linked IBIS hotel, which also has a chargeable car park, with further car parking nearby.

### ONLINE KNOCKOUT TEAMS

Entries are now open for the Online Knockout Teams, the only EBU knockout teams competition played exclusively online. For teams of four, from a squad of six all of whom are members of their own federation and a majority of one of the 'home unions'. There is a Plate competition for teams which lose their first match, so everyone is guaranteed at least two matches. Entries close on 15th March 2024

For all events, you can book online via My EBU. Or, please email [comps@ebu.co.uk](mailto:comps@ebu.co.uk) or call 01296 317203.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### Red – F2F Events

#### ■ DECEMBER 2023

- 2-3 Middlesex GP Congress, Richmond
- 5-7 Seniors Congress, RealBridge
- 8-10 Lady Milne Trophy Trials, West Midlands BC
- 10 RealBridge for Real Juniors
- 15-17 Channel Trophy, Utrecht, Netherlands
- 15-17 Teltcher Trophy Trials, Coventry & North Warwickshire BC
- 27-30 Year End Congress, Ilec Conference Centre, London

#### ■ JANUARY 2024

- 5-7 Midland Counties Congress, West Midlands BC
- 5-7 Camrose Trophy, 1st weekend, Wales
- 6-7 Manchester Congress, Altrincham
- 15-18 British Winter Sims, F2F, BBO, RealBridge
- 20-21 National Point-A-Board 2024, RealBridge
- 21 Jack High Pairs, RealBridge
- 27-28 Chester Congress, Deva Bridge Club
- 28 OODGP Swiss Teams, RealBridge

#### ■ FEBRUARY 2024

- 2-5 European Mixed Trials, tbc
- 5-8 Junior Squad Sim Pairs, various clubs
- 9-11 European Womens Trials, Stage 1, tbc
- 9-11 Harrogate Spring Congress, Harrogate
- 16-18 Junior Camrose & Peggy Bayer, N Ireland
- 17-18 Tollemache Finals, Coventry BC
- 18 OODGP Swiss Pairs, RealBridge
- 23-25 North Devon Congress, Barnstaple
- 24-25 Ranked Masters Pairs, RealBridge
- 25 Masters Pairs, F2F, BBO, RealBridge

#### ■ MARCH 2024

- 1-3 Camrose Trophy, 2nd weekend, England
- 1-3 European Womens Trials, Stage 2, tbc
- 2 Manchester Swiss Pairs, Altrincham
- 2 Leicestershire GP Swiss Pairs, Leicester
- 2-3 Norfolk GP Congress, Norwich
- 2-3 Wiltshire GP Congress, Bath
- 3 Kent GP Swiss Pairs, Tunbridge Wells
- 4-7 Club Stratified Sims, various clubs
- 4-11 EBU Overseas Congress, Majorca
- 8-10 European Seniors Trials, Stage 1, tbc
- 16-17 Cumbria GP Congress, tbc
- 16 OODGP Swiss Teams, RealBridge
- 23-24 Spring Junior Bridge Camp, Cheltenham
- 24 National Pairs regional heats, club venues
- 29-1 Easter Festival, London

#### ■ APRIL 2024

- 5-7 European Seniors Trials, Stage 2, tbc
- 7 Portland Pairs, RealBridge
- 8-11 British Spring Sim Pairs
- 12-14 Devon GP Congress, Torquay



# EBU CONGRESSES AND COMPETITIONS

All events are Green Pointed unless stated

Enter via 01296 317203, [comps@ebu.co.uk](mailto:comps@ebu.co.uk) or at [www.ebu.co.uk/members](http://www.ebu.co.uk/members)

## London Year-End Congress

27 – 30 December  
ILEC Conference Centre, London



Stratified Swiss Pairs  
Stratified Swiss Teams  
Mixed or Open Pairs  
Jack High Swiss Pairs

## National Point-a-Board Teams

20 – 21 January  
RealBridge



Weekend of Point-a-Board  
Enhanced Green Points

Player of  
the Year

## Harrogate Spring Congress

9 – 11 February  
Cedar Court Hotel, Harrogate



Swiss Pairs  
Swiss Teams  
Really Easy Pairs – LP

## Ranked Masters Pairs

24 – 25 February  
RealBridge

Since 2019, for purposes of movements, Premier Life Masters merge with Life Masters, and National Masters with Regional Masters. All groups have separate ranking lists, trophies and prizes.

### Separate competitions for:

Premier Grand Masters  
Grand Masters  
Premier Life Masters  
Life Masters  
National Masters  
Regional Masters

## Masters Pairs

25 February  
For players below Regional Master  
Various clubs

The Masters Pairs will be held at host clubs. Entry fees will be set by the clubs, so cheaper than previous years. Clubs retain part of entry fees, so you're supporting your local club. List of venues and entry information at: [www.ebu.co.uk/masters-pairs#clubs](http://www.ebu.co.uk/masters-pairs#clubs)

## Easter Festival

29 March – 1 April  
London



Stratified Swiss Teams  
Swiss Pairs  
Open Pairs – BP  
Championship Pairs – GP top half

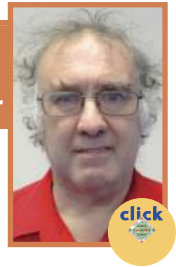
## Overseas Congress

4 – 11 March  
Cale Ratjada, Majorca



Pre-Congress Pairs – BP  
Swiss Pairs, Swiss Teams – GP  
Round Robin Pairs – GP  
Pivot Teams – BP  
Mixed, Ladies, Mens Pairs – BP





## Trouble at the table

**R**oy Young asks: Playing at a local club online (BBO) the bidding went 1NT (from partner) then 2♣ not alerted. I waited a good ten seconds to see if there was an alert. I then bid 3♣ – a general force. At this stage the 2♣ bid was alerted as a 6-card suit, which both my partner and I assumed was clubs as it didn't say any suit. We then played in 3NT going down as partner assumed LHO had six clubs when he had six spades.

We appealed the result. The director ruled the result stood on the basis that the 2♣ bid wouldn't have been alerted if it was natural. We both thought he'd alerted it because it guaranteed six.

Was the director correct in his decision?

Rather than wait, if you were expecting an alert of 2♣, you do best to click on the 2♣ bid to request an explanation. Or you can send private chat to the opponent – 'Nat?' should suffice.

Players tend to be quite terse in their explanations – I would not assume '6-card suit' means 'natural, 6-card suit'. Again, I would follow up with a request for further information – either click on the bid, or ask the opponents in private chat '6-card clubs OR any 6-card suit?'.

But the basis for the ruling is wrong. We encourage players to explain their early calls even if they are not alertable/announceable. If someone gives an explanation of their call, it does not mean that the call is alertable.

**R**ichard Cavendish had a couple of boards at the local duplicate bridge club which raised some questions. Dealer (N/V) West:

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



West opened 2♠, announced by his partner 'weak'. Is such a hand a legal Weak 2 opener?

East responded 2NT, alerted, and explained as a strong enquiry. This hand is not what I recognise as a strong enquiry!

After the hand was over, responder said that his bidding was actually designed to stop his LHO from competing, and he wanted to stop in 3♠.

♠ K
♥ 10 9 7 4 3 2
♦ 8 5 3
♣ 8 4 3

The same pair opened 3♥, not vulnerable, as dealer with this hand. It is the weakest 3-opener I have seen!

I got the feeling while playing this pair that they had an unusual agreement as to the strength (or not) of their bids.

Are there rules, laws or limits to 'weak' or preemptive bids, or can players be as off-centre as they like?

It is legal to open 2♠ on a weak hand with a 5-card spade suit and announce it as 'weak'. '5+' should be shown on the system card.

If 2NT was 'designed to stop his LHO from competing' then their agreement is not 'strong'. The 2NT should be alerted and explained (when asked) as 'showing a raise in spades, not necessarily strong'.

There is no lower limit for 'weak' as an announcement for 2-bids or as the strength of 3-bids. Very weak pre-empts are not alerted. Again, the system card should show '3+' (or '0+') HCP for a 3-suit bid, and minimum length 6 (or 5).

In the absence of system cards, the opponents should make it clear at the start of each round, that their weak opening bids can be very weak and on shorter suits than you may expect. How they 'make it clear' depends on the procedures and practices of the club.

An enquiry via EBED. This relates to a club pairs BBO game – as club policy we do not allow UNDOs. On last night's Board 16, I decided my hand was suitable for an opening weak 2♠. I typed in 'weak', but then mis-clicked and opened 2♣! I immediately realised my mistake but it was too late.

Perhaps the opposition realised that a 2♣ opening bid in Acol could not be weak. Or perhaps they thought we had some special bidding system. Should I have notified them that the bid was a mis-click? I didn't, (and we ended with 0%) but I'm wondering now what the correct procedure should have been?

Firstly, we recommend the club change to allowing UNDOs in the auction. The EBU changed when higher powers (EBL/WBF) told us that allowing UNDOs for misclicks was the appropriate implementation of Law 25A in online bridge.

If you misbid online with self-alerts and find that your explanation matches your hand but does not match your agreement, you should either change the explanation, or message both opponents privately, giving the correct explanation in your system.

To avoid misleading the opponents, you should also explain to your opponents that your new explanation does not match your hand. This may be difficult for inexperienced players to understand – you may need to call the TD so the TD can explain what is going on to the opponents.

Mary Perkin was told that her partner should alert Gerber if it is a first round 4♣ response – in other words – partner opens 1NT (weak), opponents pass, and Mary bids 4♣ Gerber, indicating a slam interest.

Mary believed that alerting was unnecessary at the four level, but the person who gave the information said that he had been on a course and that is where he was told about the new rule.

The person who had been on the course is right: conventional suit bids above 3NT **on the first round** are alerted.

So, a 4♣ Gerber response to an opening bid is alerted. This is detailed in *Blue Book* section 4B4: 'Once the auction is above the level of 3NT, no calls

are to be alerted except for:

(a) Artificial suit bids above 3NT made on the first round of bidding.

1♠ – Pass – 4♣ (splinter) or  
Pass – Pass – 1♠ – Pass – 4♣ (splinter).

In both cases 4♣ is alerted

In the examples 'splinter' could be replaced by 'Gerber'.

(I could add that this rule is not very 'new'.)

Members of a club are having trouble understanding announcing of doubles, particularly with the common auctions:

W	N	E	S
1♣	1♥	Dble	

W	N	E	S
1♣	1♠	Dble	

Doubles are only announced when they are on the first round of the auction by third or fourth hand (responder or advancer).

1♣ – (3♠) – Dble. Some play 'negative doubles to 2♠' so this double is penalties and is alerted.

1♦ – (2♣) – Dble. If this double shows 'values to bid at the two level but no descriptive bid, usually four cards in at least one unbid suit', then it is takeout and is not alerted or announced.

1♣ – (1♠) – Dble. Some used to play that this was similar to the previous – length in the unbid suits – this is takeout and is not alerted or announced. If however, this shows four (or more) hearts and nothing about other suits, then it is a proxy and announced as 'hearts'.

1♣ – (1♥) – Dble. If this shows four spades it is a 'proxy' and is announced as 'spades'. This is true whether it shows exactly four spades or can be more than four spades.

1♣ – (1♦) – Dble, showing both majors. It is not unexpected that a takeout double of 1♦ has both majors, and this is not alerted or announced.

Players should not worry unduly about the details of this answer. It is more important for players to ensure their methods are properly disclosed to their opponents than how precisely they are disclosed. □

## MEMBER SUSPENDED

An EBU Disciplinary Committee considered the following charge against Adam Wiseberg (BBO account name: adam 13) at a hearing in June 2023.

- ❖ That the defendant used his access privileges as a Tournament Director to view the full layout of hands, that could enable him to take decisions in bidding and play that were unlikely to have been taken without that access.

The defendant was a tournament director on RealBridge and Bridgebase Online (BBO). The defendant denied the charge, and a disciplinary hearing was held. The Disciplinary Committee found the charge proved to their comfortable satisfaction, and that the defendant's conduct constituted an offence under 3.2(iii) of the EBU Disciplinary Rules, being unfair or dishonest play in an organised duplicate bridge event.

The Committee imposed a sanction of suspension of EBU membership for a period of three years and a 10 year ban from playing for England in any representative event. The defendant appealed and the Appeal Committee denied the appeal.

Note: The EBU does not grant approval for any suspended member to act as a tournament director in any EBU licensed event.

## MEMBERS SUSPENDED

An EBU Disciplinary Committee considered the following charge against Ian Hart (BBO account name: Ian273) and Richard Peate (BBO account name: palindrome) in September 2023.

- ❖ That when the defendants played in some online games on the Bridgebase Online (BBO) platform, they had knowledge of some aspects of each other's hands obtained by illicit information. They both took advantage of this information to take bridge actions which they might not have taken in the absence of such knowledge.

These actions constituted an offence under Rule 3.2(iii), unfair or dishonest play in an organised duplicate bridge event, whether online or face to face.

The defendants initially denied the charges when first asked to comment but later admitted them. A disciplinary meeting was held. The Disciplinary Committee found that the defendants' conduct constituted an offence under paragraph 3.2(iii) of the EBU Disciplinary Rules, being unfair or dishonest play. They considered the mitigation offered.

The Committee imposed a sanction of suspension of EBU membership for a period of two years and a ban on representing England for ten years.

## OLICANA'S DIAMOND JUBILEE

Olicana Bridge Club in the West Yorkshire town of Ilkley celebrated its Diamond Jubilee in 2023. Every two months throughout the year the club held a diamond day to enable as many as



possible of its 300+ members to take part. Players enjoyed their bridge with a celebration cake and a fun mystery competition with prizes. These have been popular as was the special Sunday Social event in July when around 40 members enjoyed the bridge accompanied by strawberries and cream, Prosecco and light snacks. The club runs a packed programme of play and teaching: [www.bridgewebs.com/olicana/](http://www.bridgewebs.com/olicana/)



## 100 YEARS OLD & STILL PLAYING

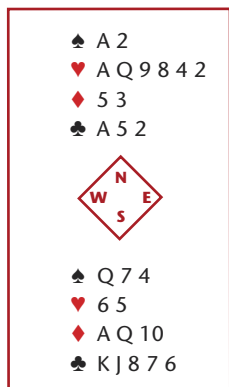


CONGRATULATIONS to Ken Flavell who turned 100 in mid-November. Ken started playing bridge in 1944 and still plays once a week with his wife Pat on BBO.



A play problem for you, with no opposition bidding to help:

South plays in 3NT. West leads the ♠5.



The Covid pandemic in 2020 created an online cheating pandemic. The EBU was faced with an avalanche of complaints of alleged cheating on BBO without suitable rules in place for the nuances of online play and without the resources to investigate, prosecute and judge. Nevertheless a number of people volunteered and stepped up to meet the challenge. We should all be thankful they did, as while cheating no doubt continues, it is hoped that the deterrent effect of knowing that we will investigate all complaints has contributed to the sharp decline in cases. I am very happy to report that the number of investigations has fallen from around fifty at the peak, to less than a handful today. The Online Ethics and Investigation Group (OEIG) was established to investigate complaints under the auspices of the Laws & Ethics Committee and set about trying to find a method that would stand up to scrutiny in a hearing, where three members of the Disciplinary Panel, independent of the L&E, would hear the arguments for the Prosecution and Defence and take a decision.

I volunteered to join the squad of OEIG analysts after a personal experience playing in what was

known as the Lockdown League. A player led small from AKx against a suit contract to find partner with Qx. How was that possible I thought to myself. Apparently the pair were already being investigated and subsequently were banned.

A key challenge exists. How do you prove that someone is cheating with ‘comfortable satisfaction’ – a lower bar than ‘beyond reasonable doubt’, but higher than ‘the balance of probabilities’? There are three main types of offence:

- ❖ Collusion – where partners are sharing information across a room or on the phone;
  - ❖ Self-kibitzing – where a single player is viewing the whole layout of the hand, not just their own; and
  - ❖ Self-collusion – a hybrid of the others where a player ‘invents’ a partner and plays both hands.
- There are then four main sources of evidence:
- ❖ The online platform’s connection data, particularly relevant in self-kibitzing cases;
  - ❖ Statistics such as error rates versus double dummy for defensive leads and declarer play;
  - ❖ Performance information from the NGS dataset;
  - ❖ The bidding and play from individual hands themselves.

Not only were there challenges with all of these sources, but those accused were finding loopholes in the Disciplinary Rules to exploit, often using representatives to make the defence case for them. A perfectly valid approach to take, but the behaviour of representatives and others who contributed from the sidelines was often appalling. Intimidating EBU volunteers and employees by accusing them of lying, bias and defamation to name but three. If they lost their case within our rules, some defendants sought outside courts for a remedy and all lost. The toll on the people trying to protect our game from the cheats was, and still is, immense.

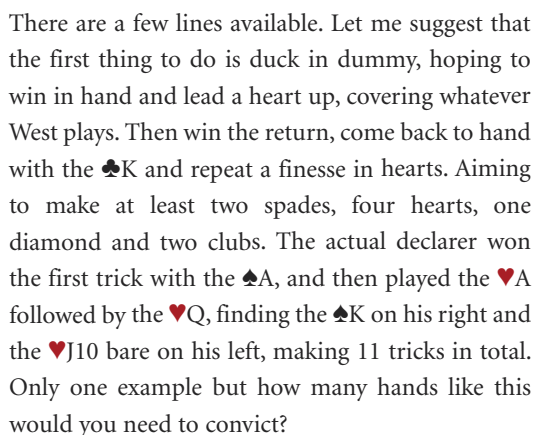
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Personally, I joined the Prosecution Panel, then became Vice-Chair of the L&E Committee. The team is determined to make the game as clean as possible for all our honest members, but it is a thankless task. You only ever hear from those who sympathise with the cheats, those who could never believe that their good friend could do what they were found guilty of. 'It's a kangaroo court' they exclaim, with little understanding of the steps we all take to ensure fairness. From a prosecutor's point of view, and while the right thing to do, it is often frustrating that the independent Disciplinary Committees who hear the cases bend over backwards to allow defendants leeway in the approaches they take. We do not publicise the grisly detail of cases, but maybe we should?

We are developing new detection methods and have successfully used one in a recent case, where the defendants confessed without needing to go to a hearing. Hopefully this was at least partly a result of one of the rule changes last year, which was to offer a much reduced sanction to those who admit wrongdoing early. It saves everyone involved many hours of work. Another change we introduced was to have a different process for inexperienced members, so that we can nip the issue in the bud rather than prosecute, although we will continue to take action against those who should know better.

Finally, back to the play problem, played by a player of county standard who denied self-kibitzing charges. The question is how many suspicious hands do you need to be comfortably satisfied that someone is cheating? And what if the same player makes mistakes on twice as many other hands? Would these negate the conclusion reached on the suspicious ones?



I am often asked why people cheat. Apart from the early Covid days when the most often used reason seemed to be that 'I think everyone else is doing so, so I am just levelling the playing field', it seems just a question of ego, trying to pretend you are better than your peers. It is a high risk strategy in terms of personal reputation if you are discovered.

The online game is booming and seems here to stay. I am aware of at least one national governing body that has chosen to just focus on face-to-face competition, rather than embroil themselves in the potential perils of managing online play. The EBU chooses to embrace both forms. Please do your bit to keep the game clean by reporting activity you believe to be suspicious and we will continue to endeavour to ensure that you are playing in a fair contest. 

# Just making a point

by John Larkin

**S**cenario: European Football Qualifiers. Scotland get off to a fine start with victories over Cyprus and Spain...they go on to beat them both again, edge out Norway twice, and comfortably dispatch Georgia. Unfortunately, this section's winner is decided exclusively by Goal Difference, and Spain whack Cyprus 36-0 (cf. Arbroath v Bon Accord 1885) – when the latter have three men sent off – and advance to the finals.

Have you ever tried to explain to a sensible person how the scoring works in bridge matches? The complete novice is easy. They give up at 'big' and 'little' suits. But used-to-play-at school/college/university types who have never played duplicate are trickier:

'So you are comparing with your teammates in the other room?'

'Correct.'

'What if they get better hands?'

'They get the same hands.'

'So won't that always be a draw?'

'No. You are trying to do better with the same cards...'

'...and *beat* your teammates?'

'No. Sorry. They get the other team's cards.'

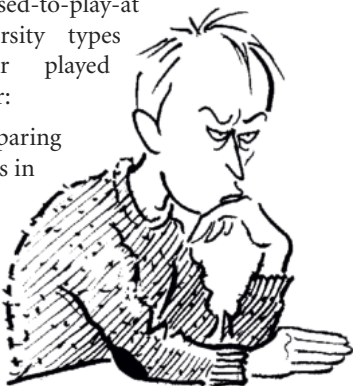
'?'

'Sorry again. The other team in my room. I should have said we are comparing our score with the opponents in the other room.'

'So...you are in 2♣ making an extra overtrick, and you get 20 points?'

'Well, no. We'll get one point.'

'And two points if you make two overtricks?'



'Yea...er, no. Actually, still one point, unless spades or hearts are trumps.'

'Unless spades or hearts are trumps in two clubs...'

'Are you doing this deliberately? Look, I've got a table here that explains the conversion...'

'Conversion? And that's an extra two points?'

'Don't start. Just look at the table.'

[BREAK IN TEMPO (BiT)]

'Er...Yep... I see. Crystal... Is the 'difference in points' below or above the line?'

[BiT]

'Ok. I get it now. And after 24 hands, you might

win 85-35 and boost your goal difference – sorry, points – sorry, IMPs ... just being cheeky.'

'Well, no. You only win by Victory Points.'

'So, 50 Victory Points, then?'

'No. You can only get 20, so it's actually [THINKS] 18.19. The opps get 1.81.'

'They get Victory Points for getting cuffed?'

'Yes, it all adds up to... look, I've got another table here that'll...'

[BiT]

'OK... And how many points do you get for winning the match?'

'Er... none.'

I've often wondered why we use actual score in matches to decide championships etc, rather than two points for a win (or three, though the

*Cont/ ...*



mathematics of that innovation trouble me), one for a draw. Does anyone else do it? Even chess counts match points before board count, head-to-head result, backward board count...

To be fair, it does keep interest going, short and long-term. In a match, clearly struggling, you fight until the end for potentially important fractions. One of my favourite bridge memories was against hugely superior opps in the Scottish Online League 'formative' first run (to decide which division each team would start in). We played the first half like dazzled rabbits. Our opps thoughtfully offered to accept any concession. So we didn't offer one, won the second half by 3 IMPS, and gloried in our 0.03-19.97 defeat.

And longer term, interest in league placings is maintained throughout the season. I have twice approached the last match, mid-table, with both the hope of promotion and the fear of relegation. So maybe not all bad.

But what prompted these current musings?

The Lady Milne took place in April.

England won (surprise, surprise) with 67.07 Victory Points, Ireland close behind on 65.12, Scotland third (58.72). But the Win/Draw column caught my eye. Ireland won four games out of five, Scotland 3.5 (draw v England), Wales three, England 'fourth' on 2.5. Crushing wins against N Ireland and SBU carried England through... alongside a few Victory Points for defeats... □

*From Bonnie Scotland with fondest regards and most heartfelt congratulations to England on their victory! Like the angostura, I'm not bitter...*



## BGB ONLINE JUNIOR PAIRS

The Bridge Great Britain Online Junior Pairs was held in September on RealBridge. The Under 21 category was won by the English pair, Raphaella Sinclair & Harriet Cork (EBU) with a score of 54.12%. Iolo Williams & James Brindle (WBU) finished in second place, and Michael Kennedy & Kevin Ren (SBU) in third place.

The Under 26 category was won by the Irish pair of Luca Crone & Matthew O'Farrell (CBAI), with a score of 57.21%. In second place were Rufus Behr & Jamie Day (SBU) and Kajetan Granops & Adam Serafin (SBU) finished third.

The event was organised by BGB and hosted by the Contract Bridge Association of Ireland.

## EBED YOUTH CAMP



September's EBED youth camp saw 72 youngsters from all parts of the country, ranging from seven to 20 years of age, descend on the Pioneer Centre in Northampton. This was the largest number of students for the event in more than 15 years. The atmosphere was very friendly and the attendees enjoyed table tennis and pool between bridge sessions.

The U20 squad had a good training session and the minibridge class included 10 students from Bradford. Congratulations go to Lucy Norman and Lottie Bedford, winners of the Ashok Kwatra Cup which was played on Saturday evening. Further congratulations go to Lucy, winner of the Grand Prix and to Max Blicharz winner of the U14 GP section, which is run over six events during the year. During the course of the weekend 15 juniors were awarded minibridge certificates, eight received their Bronze award, seven silver and five gold. Three of the certificate recipients are pictured above, Archer & Alexander (Cheltenham), Henry (Chalfont St Peter).



## Take the Red Pill

In the *fin de siècle* seminal science fiction movie *The Matrix* the lead character is offered a choice to take a Blue Pill or a Red Pill. The Blue Pill will let him carry on with his life as normal. The Red Pill will allow him to see the brutal truth of the world he lives in and how he's been enslaved to powers of which he knows nothing. It's a stretch perhaps to translate this life-changing moment to the bridge classroom but let me try. Our students as they near the end of their classes also need to make a decision – do they take the Blue Pill and carry on playing friendly kitchen bridge, supervised duplicates and gentle deals from No Fear Bridge or do they take the Red Pill and set foot in the gladiatorial duplicate club room?

Those of us who took the Red Pill years ago know how much we need new players to support our ailing and ageing clubs because we know the truth – that playing proper competitive bridge is a thrill like no other. It engages the intellect, the memory and a fair range of emotions. Brutal it may be but we would far rather risk the highs and lows of the clubroom than waste an afternoon playing rubber round a kitchen table with hand-dealt cards.

The statistics are depressing – only one in eight students makes the transition from the classroom to the club room. What can we do as teachers? We can aim to teach bridge as a competitive game rather than as an abstract set of rules. An emphasis on scoring helps with this – but how to teach it? Just telling the class makes for the world's most boring lesson in my experience but it's too much for them to learn themselves for homework.

A drip feed process works best with some quizzes along the way. Stop them cheating by looking at the bidding box cards. It's quite easy to let students play set hands on a topic and skip the scoring – try and make time for this. Most important of all, make an

explicit link between the contract and the scoring by asking them to project the scores while they plan the play. So if a student is doubled in 5♠ vulnerable, having bid over 5♥ non-vulnerable, and looks to be going two off, make them calculate the loss of 500 points over the likely 450 and understand the error of their ways. It's quite tempting for them to shrug and view a bottom as just unlucky.

The same applies when teaching pre-emptive bidding: it can just be seen as fun to outdo the opposition and steal the contract, but putting the bidding in the context of likely scores grounds the player and helps them make better decisions. Teach players that a sacrifice is not a noble gesture as its name suggests, but a strategic weapon in their bridge armoury.

Running mini-duplicates as part of your lessons can serve to whet the students' appetite for competition. It helps enormously if there is a local club that can run a simple systems/no fear duplicate alongside their regular games – maybe in the same room at the same time so the newcomers can see what is going on.

I need barely mention that I hope clubs fall over backwards to welcome the nervous newbie. Forgive them their hesitations and do not enquire too closely into their bids. Do not argue across them at the table – smile and be encouraging. Then you can get them hooked on the wonders of our combative game.

Fundamentally, the game with the lowest element of chance and the highest level of skill is the most rewarding and if our students are allowed to settle for less, we are selling them short. Let's do everything we can to make them take the Red Pill and they will never look back. □

Any alternative views, teaching tips or ideas are welcome. [marysharp@btinternet.com](mailto:marysharp@btinternet.com)





Examples are one of the best ways to learn and test your knowledge. When beginners first encounter transfers, they can assume they are for 'weak hands only' but in reality they offer an incredibly informative way to reach a good contract. Try these examples from our *Continuing Bridge* textbooks.

**Q** Your partner opens the bidding **1NT** (opponents pass). What is your response and how might you expect to continue the bidding?

1

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

2

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

3

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

4

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



### BRIDGE FOR ALL TEXTBOOKS

The **Bridge for All** textbooks have exercises and practice hands, and you can see preview pages on our website. Books can be purchased directly from EBED with discounts available for all members of English Bridge Teachers Association.

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partner completes the transfer you plan to bid 4♦ to show your second suit and offer a choice. You will continue to slam in either hearts, diamonds or no trumps, depending on your partner's reply.

3♥ shows five or more spades. Once opener has completed the transfer, you can bid on with 4NT which is Blackwood. Your follow up plan will be to bid 6♥ if partner shows two or three aces.

1 Bid 2♥ to tell your partner you hold five or more spades. Here you have no interest in game, so plan to pass after opener completes the transfer with 2♣.

2 Bid 2♦ to tell partner you hold five or more hearts. This time you will bid on to 3NT as you have enough for game. Opener may well choose 4♥ if they hold three or more hearts.

3♦ shows you hold five or more hearts. This time the transfer is at the three level. After



# Beat Today's Experts

## 1. E/W Game. Dealer South

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

Seven out of eight tables in the Bermuda Bowl quarter-finals reached 4♠. Italy faced Poland here, and Percario saw the chance of game when East raised to 2♠. He made a help-suit game-try of 3♥. East saw that his ♥QJx would help partner with his losers in that suit, so he raised to 3♠, and game was again reached.

Another auction was 1♣ – 1♠ – 3♠ – 4♠, since some players do not show diamonds, with 4-5 lengths, unless they are strong enough to bid twice. West judged to raise to 3♠, and game was again reached.

**Awards:** 4♠ (10), 3♠ (6), 3NT (5), other part scores (3).

West	North	East	South
Percario	Wojciech	Donati	Rafal
1♣	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♠	All Pass

## 2. E/W Game. Dealer West

	♠ 2	
	♥ QJ987	
	♦ J64	
	♣ QJ87	
♠ K874		♠ AQJ93
♥ 4		♥ AK103
♦ AK1053		♦ Q
♣ 1053		♣ A62
	♠ 1065	
	♥ 652	
	♦ 9872	
	♣ K94	

Switzerland face USA2 in the Bermuda Bowl semi-finals. West opens 1♦, with his three good cards. When East hears a spade raise, he bids Roman Key-card Blackwood. The 5♥ response shows two key-cards (the ♠K and the ♦A). 5NT asks for side-suit kings and 6♦ shows specifically the ♦K. East can now count three diamond tricks, enough for two club discards. The top contract of 7♠ is reached.

At the other table of this match, West again opened 1♦ and 7♠ was reached on an almost identical auction. In the second semi-final, between Norway and Italy, both Wests passed. Italy managed to reach 6♠, but Norway stopped in 4♠.

**Awards:** 7♠ (10), 6♠ (7), games (3).

West	North	East	South
Martel	Drijver	Fleisher	Brink
1♦	1♥	1♠	Pass
2♠	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♥	Pass	5NT	Pass
6♦	Pass	7♠	All Pass

### 3. Game All. Dealer West

♠ 10  
 ♥ K 8 5  
 ♦ 10 9 5 2  
 ♣ K J 10 7 2

♠ A K J 7 3  
 ♥ 2  
 ♦ A Q J 7  
 ♣ Q 5 3

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

♠ 9 8 4  
 ♥ A Q 9 6 4  
 ♦ 6 3  
 ♣ 9 8 4

West	North	East	South
<i>J. Liu</i>	<i>Bakke</i>	<i>Zhuang</i>	<i>Brogeland</i>
1♠	Pass	3♥ <sup>A</sup>	Pass
4♥ <sup>A</sup>	Pass	5♣ <sup>A</sup>	Pass
5♦ <sup>A</sup>	Pass	6♣	All Pass

China fought magnificently in their Bermuda Bowl quarter-final against Norway, who had finished first in the round-robin.

With four boards to play, China led by 197-192. Here, 3♥ indicated a sound double raise (3♠ would have been preemptive.) West's 4♥ was then a splinter bid, showing shortage. After two cue-bids, they bid the slam.

If trumps break 2-2, you can draw trumps, discard a club on the diamonds and ruff two clubs in dummy. If trumps are 3-1, you can survive if the player with three trumps also has four diamonds. The slam, slightly against the odds, went one down.

West	North	East	South
<i>Helgemo</i>	<i>Yi Liu</i>	<i>Grude</i>	<i>L. Hu</i>
1♠	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

At the other table, Helgemo and Grude had a simple auction. With slam going down, China lost 13 IMPs instead of gaining 13 IMPs, eventually losing the match by just 5 IMPs. Bridge can be a cruel game!

**Awards:** 5♠/4♠ (10), 6♠ (8).

#### 4. Game All. Dealer East

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

♠ A 9 7 6  
 ♥ A K 10 9 8  
 ♦ Q 7 5  
 ♣ Q

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

♠ K J 10 8  
 ♥ 4 2  
 ♦ 9 8 3  
 ♣ K 10 9 8

A diamond-shaped diagram with a yellow border and a light yellow background. Inside the diamond, the letters N, S, E, and W are arranged to represent the four suits: N at the top, S at the bottom, E on the right, and W on the left.

West	North	East	South
<i>Harding</i>	<i>Ovelius</i>	<i>Fuglestad</i>	<i>Grönkvist</i>
1NT	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♠ <sup>A</sup>	Pass	2♦	Pass
		3NT	All Pass

The amazing Sweden women's team had won 18 consecutive matches when they faced Norway in the quarter-finals of the Venice Cup. Just look at the great play from both tables on this board.

Marianne Harding responded 1NT because a 2♦ response would have been game-forcing (the two-over-one system). Since she had denied spades with the 1NT response, 2♠ then showed a strong diamond raise. Against 3NT, North led the ♠5 to South's king. Ida Gronkvist then switched to the ♣K. Declarer held up the ♣A for two rounds and then played diamonds. When the Swedish North won with the ♦A, she had no club to play. Declarer claimed nine tricks for +600.

West	North	East	South
<i>Clementsson</i>	<i>Vist</i>	<i>Bertheau</i>	<i>Heskje</i>
1NT	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♠ <sup>A</sup>	Pass	2♦	Pass
5♦	All Pass	3♠	Pass

Norway found an excellent defence to beat 5♦. Torild Heskje led a trump to the ace and Gunn Tove Vist switched to a spade. South won with the king and returned a deadly second trump to beat the game. No other defence would succeed.

Norway gained 13 IMPs on this board and beat Sweden by 231 - 189.

**Awards:** 5♦/3NT (10), part scores (6), 4NT (4), 6♦ (2).

## 5. N/S Game. Dealer East

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

West	North	East	South
<i>Y. Johansson</i>	<i>Huberschwimmer</i>	<i>L. Johansson</i>	<i>Rossard</i>
Dble	Pass	1♦	1♥
4♠	All Pass	3♠	Pass

Sweden face France in the Venice Cup round-robin. Ylva Johansson would bid 1♠ with five spades, but makes a negative double with four. East views her hand as a jump to 3♠ and is raised to game. Louise Johansson ducks the ♥K lead. She wins the next heart, draws trumps, and must then play the diamond suit for just one loser. In the Bermuda Bowl some declarers went off, leading towards the queen and finessing the 10 later. Here, Louise reasoned that South's length in hearts suggested a doubleton diamond honour. She continued with ace and another diamond. Brilliant! The jack, queen and king cleared the suit. She ruffed the ♥10 return, and cashed three diamond tricks. Dummy's last trump gave her the game.

This was worth 10 IMPs when France's Sabine Rolland lost two diamond tricks, going one down.

**Awards:** 4♠ (10), 3♠/2♠ (6), 3NT (1).

## 6. N/S Game. Dealer South

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

West	North	East	South
<i>Huang</i>	<i>Fuglestad</i>	<i>Ran</i>	<i>Harding</i>
2NT	Pass	4♥ <sup>A</sup>	Pass
4♠	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♦	Pass	5♥	Pass
7♠	All Pass		

China faced Norway in the bronze medal match in the Venice Cup. Jing Rong Ran's 4♥ response was a transfer to spades. This allowed her to bid RKCB on the next round, with spades agreed. Yan Huang's 5♦ response showed three keycards (1430 responses). When East asked for the ♠Q, West would respond 6♣ or 6♦ to name her only side-suit king. With two side-suit kings, and facing a six-card or longer trump suit, Huang went all the way to 7♠. Splendid!

In the gold-medal match, Israel (the eventual winners) had to overcome a weak 2♦ from South. Their exuberant auction was: Dble – 3♦, 4♦ – 5♠, 7NT. Only twelve top tricks, yes, but on the last spade South had no good discard from ♦Q9 ♣Q95 under West's ♦K10 ♣K107. She threw the ♣9 and that suit was then known to be 2-2 and the third club trick rescued the grand slam.

**Awards:** 7♠ (10), 7NT (7), 6NT/6♠ (5), games (1).

Sorry, our world championship stars scored 58/60! Let's look for some tips.

### TIPS TO REMEMBER

- ❖ After 1♣-1NT-2♣, 1♦-1NT-2♦ or 1♦-1NT-2♠, you can bid 2♥ or 2♠ to show a strong raise.
- ❖ Playing RKCB, show specific kings over the 5NT king-ask.





# Gold Cup Finals 2023

by David Bird



## Prospecting for Gold

Four strong teams reached the semi-finals of the 2023 Gold Cup. *De Botton* faced *Penfold*; *Allfrey* faced *Knottenbelt*. In the third segment of the first semi-final, there were two swings of 15 IMPs!

Board 20. Game All. Dealer West

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



West	North	East	South
<i>Malinowski</i>	<i>B. Senior</i>	<i>de Botton</i>	<i>Penfold</i>
1♠	Pass	2♦	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♥	Pass	4♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♣	Pass
5NT	Pass	6♦	Pass
7♠	Dble	All Pass	

That was two down for 500 away. The 5♣ RKC response showed zero or three keycards. Artur Malinowski assumed it was three and bid 7♠. The recommended safeguard is for West to bid just 5♠ over 5♣, after which East will advance if she has three keycards. North held ♠AK5 and South ♠J7, so 5♠ would have made. At the other table the bidding was:

West	North	East	South
<i>Holland</i>	<i>Hoftaniska</i>	<i>Mould</i>	<i>Charlsen</i>
1♠	Pass	3♦ <sup>1</sup>	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♠	All Pass

<sup>1</sup> Bergen raise

John Holland and Alan Mould scored +650 giving *Penfold* 15 IMPs.

However, the favour was returned on this board:

Board 23. Game All. Dealer South

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



In the Open Room, Thomas Charlsen for *de Botton* (South) opened 1NT. Holland and Mould (*Penfold*) then bid to 4♥, going one down.

West	North	East	South
<i>Malinowski</i>	<i>B. Senior</i>	<i>de Botton</i>	<i>Penfold</i>
2♥	Pass	Pass	1♦
Pass	2♠	Dble	Dble
Pass	Rdble <sup>A</sup>	All Pass	Pass

Brian Senior ventured an SOS Redouble, asking partner to choose one of the minors. (If instead North had good values – impossible on this bidding – he would be happy to make game in 2♠ doubled). Sandra Penfold let the redouble stand. She had three-card spade support and rightly feared the worst, one level higher in 3♣ or 3♦. Yes, but 2♠ was redoubled. The defenders let one trick get away, but it was still +1000 for two down redoubled. A gain of 15 IMPs.

With one 8-board set to go *Penfold* led by 158-110. In one of the biggest fightbacks in Gold Cup history, *de Botton* took the last set 69-0! In the final they would meet *Allfrey* (who beat *Knottenbelt* 157-109). This was the biggest board in the *Allfrey* vs *de Botton* encounter:



# National Point-a-Board Teams

**Board 30. Love All. Dealer East**

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

West	North	East	South
<i>Crouch</i>	<i>Hoftaniska</i>	<i>Cope</i>	<i>Charlsen</i>
			1♥
Pass	1♠	Pass	3♠
Pass	3NT <sup>A</sup>	Pass	4♣
Pass	4NT <sup>A</sup>	Pass	5♣ <sup>A</sup>
Pass	5♦ <sup>A</sup>	Pass	6♣ <sup>A</sup>
Pass	7♠	All Pass	

At the other table, Alexander Allfrey and Andrew Robson had stopped in 6♠, making +980. Here, 3NT gave South the space to cuebid his ♣A. 5♣ indicated three (or zero) keycards. and 6♣ showed the ♠Q but no side-suit king. Thor Erik Hoftaniska would either collect 11 IMPs, by making the grand slam, or lose 14 IMPs. Before we see how the play went, let us salute his bravery in bidding 7♠ when the ♥K and ♣K were missing.

Hoftaniska won the trump lead with the jack and played a heart to the queen and ace. After ruffing a heart in his hand, he led a trump on which East discarded a diamond (North had not mentioned his diamonds in the auction). Declarer drew trumps and led the ♦10, running the card when it was not covered. He ruffed the ♥J with his last trump and played the ♦A, dropping the queen. His ♦KJ6 were then good and the grand slam was made. Holding the guards in all three side suits, Simon Cope was always going to be in trouble, however he discarded.

*De Botton* eventually won the Gold Cup by 137 IMPs to 114. Many congratulations to Dame Janet de Botton, David Bakhshi, Thomas Charlsen, Thor Erik Hoftaniska, Artur Malinowski and Tom Townsend. □

**20th - 21st  
January 2024  
RealBridge**

**Like a  
duplicate but  
with team-  
mates!**

**Enhanced  
Master  
Points!**



## Answers from page 9



Hand 1		
	♠ Q 10 6	
	♥ 10 2	
	♦ 6 4	
	♣ K Q J 8 4 3	
♠ K 9 8 5 3	<div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">             N W   S   E           </div>	♠ 4 2
♥ K J 7 4		♥ 9 8 5
♦ Q 8 2		♦ K 9 7 5 3
♣ 5		♣ A 7 2
	♠ A J 7	
	♥ A Q 6 3	
	♦ A J 10	
	♣ 10 9 6	

### 3NT. West leads the ♠5.

It looks likely that 3NT will be the contract in the other room too, but making your contract could still lead to a positive swing.

You have three top tricks. It might be possible to win an extra trick in hearts or diamonds, but you expect to win five club tricks, as well as a second spade trick. Given that nine tricks appear to be in sight, you should consider what possibilities could disrupt your plan.

If an opponent has ♣Axx, or ♣Axxx they will be able to win the ♣A on the third round, and you will need an entry to dummy. This entry can only come from spades, so you should carefully consider your play to trick one. If you play the ♠10 (or ♠Q), and

this wins the trick, you can now attack clubs. If East wins the ♣A on the third round then leads a spade, you will be unable to win a second spade trick in the dummy if West has the ♠K, leaving you stranded from the rest of dummy's winning clubs.

However, an entry to dummy can be guaranteed by winning trick one with the ♠A. Now when East wins the ♣A, returning a spade will promote dummy's ♠Q. If, instead, East plays a low heart or diamond, you can play low from hand, and West cannot now profitably return either red suit. Upon regaining the lead, you can now lead a spade towards dummy, thereby forcing an entry to the winning clubs. Which spade? The ♠J, covering with the ♠Q if West plays low. If East holds the ♠K you still have an entry to table with the next spade.

# Heffalump Traps

by David Bakhshi



## Hand 2

♠ 8 3  
♥ A K 2  
♦ A 8 6 3 2  
♣ Q J 6

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

♠ 10 7 6 2  
♥ 9 8 7 6 3  
♦ K J 9  
♣ 7

♠ K 5  
♥ 4  
♦ 10 5 4  
♣ A K 10 9 5 3 2

5♣. West opened 1♠. West leads the ♥Q.

3NT would have been an easier contract to make, so it may be necessary to make 5♣ to avoid a big loss.

You have 10 top tricks, and could make an extra trick if East has the ♠A. However, that looks very unlikely, so you will need to make an extra trick in diamonds. If East wins a diamond trick and leads a spade then you will be defeated if West has the ♠A.

Is it possible to make an extra trick in diamonds without losing the lead to East?

If you win the ♥K and cash the ♥A, then whether you discard a spade or a diamond, you will still be left with three losers in those suits, so are there any other options to consider?

If you could trump the second round of diamonds, you would not have to give East the opportunity to lead a spade. This can be achieved by playing low from the dummy at trick one.

West cannot profitably cash the ♠A, so say he plays a second heart. You win the ♥AK, throwing two diamonds, then play the ♦A, and trump a diamond with the ♣9. If both opponents follow, you cross to the ♣J, and trump another diamond with a high trump. With diamonds splitting 3-2, dummy's last two diamonds have been established, so you draw the last trump, winning in the dummy, and cash the ♦86, throwing two spades. The 3-2 split allows you to make an overtrick when West does not cash the ♠A at trick two.



# Heffalump Traps

by David Bakhshi



Hand 3

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

## 6♦. West leads the ♥Q.

You have bid to a reasonable slam that might not be bid at the other table, and following West's ♥Q lead, you count 10 top tricks. Trumping a club will bring your total to 11 winners, and the extra trick will need to come from spades.

If East has the ♠K, you can easily win an extra trick, so you should look for a way to succeed when West has the ♠K. The best way to do that will be to force West to lead into the ♠AQ. You should therefore plan to eliminate some safe options. You could do this by drawing trumps, unblocking the ♥A, then trumping a club in your hand and a heart in the dummy before leading a spade from dummy.

Unfortunately having weak intermediate cards in spades means that East can play high on the first

round of spades, leaving you unable to duck the trick to West. If West has the ♠K, you will now have to lose two spade tricks.

Following West's ♥Q lead, they can be assumed to also hold the ♥J. If West has the ♥J, then there is a certain way to throw West on lead. You win the ♥K, draw trumps, cash the ♥A, then play three rounds of clubs trumping in your hand before leading the ♥10.

If West plays low, then you can throw a spade from the dummy, but West will presumably play the ♥J. If you still throw a spade from the dummy, then West will now be forced to concede a ruff-and-discard, or will lead a spade round to your ♠AQ, thereby presenting you with your 12th trick.

## by David Bakhshi



♠ Q 5  
♥ 6 4  
♦ 8 6 4  
♣ Q 10 9 8 5 3

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

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

♠ A K 6 2  
♥ A J  
♦ A 10 3  
♣ K J 4 2

If East started with the  $\spadesuit KJ$ , then the diamonds will be blocked. If East is allowed to win the  $\spadesuit J$ , he will not be able to play a third round, and if West overtakes with the  $\spadesuit K$ , then your  $\spadesuit 10$  will be a winner, so East will be allowed to win the trick with the  $\spadesuit J$  and switch to hearts, but you can now win the  $\heartsuit A$ , and make an overtrick.  $\square$



## Answers to September's Problems

**T**his time around all the problems have been sent to me. Problem 1 is from international and my teammate in Wuhan 2019, Malcolm Pryor; problem 2 is from Dave Robinson who has just recently won the Teltscher Trophy and the Gerard Faulkner Salver so congratulations to him; and problem 3 is from a university friend so someone I have known for 45 years, Michael Waller. He has just returned to the game after a long absence during which he 'got a life'!

### Hand 1

♠ J 10 9 4 2  
♥ 8 4 2  
♦ 10  
♣ K 10 9 2

South	West	North	East
		1NT <sup>1</sup>	Pass
3♦ <sup>2</sup>	Pass	4NT <sup>3</sup>	Pass
5♠ <sup>4</sup>	Pass	6♦	All Pass

<sup>1</sup>15-17. <sup>2</sup> Natural slam try. <sup>3</sup> RKCB. <sup>4</sup> 2KC+♦Q.

To a large extent this is a function of how much you trust the opposition. This is a pretty wild auction – why should the no trump bidder launch into Blackwood? If you trust them, they really ought to have each plain suit guarded and a source of tricks, but bidders like this often take gambles. So, what is your guess...

**a) ♠J: 10 marks, other spade: 3 marks.** This is the 'book lead' and who is to say it is wrong? Not me. It gives nothing away which is probably what you need against this slam. I have advocated frequently in this column that you need to lead very aggressively against suit slams, but there are limits even for me. A strong NT in dummy and a slam try opposite is too much even for me, so the passive ♠J it is. Why can dummy not have AQ of spades and partner the king?

**(b) any heart: 2 marks.** I don't like this lead – it is neither one thing nor the other. It is neither

aggressive nor safe (imagine partner with Qxx(x) of hearts for example) and you have just saved declarer a guess.

**(c) ♦10: 1 mark.** It is almost never right to lead trumps against freely bid slams and this, in my view, is no exception. It does nothing.

**(d) ♠10: 7 marks, ♣2: 5 marks, ♠K: 4 marks, ♣9: 1 mark.** In my view, the only other choice than the ♠J is a club. This was the winner at the table as partner had the ♣A and no other high cards so declarer's club losers went away. People who punt like this get away with it sometimes – that is bridge.

**Pairs Bonus: ♠J: 5 marks.** : Same lead for the same reasons. There is less reason to lead a club here as that may well be the overtrick, but then as I have often said, a slam bid and made by the oppo is never a good score for you.

I am interested in what Nathan's computer will lead...

### Computer simulations – best lead:

♥4/2: 25.3% chance of defeating the contract (teams)

♥4/2 and ♠10/9: 1.01 tricks - highest average tricks taken with this lead (pairs proxy)

I struggle to see why a heart is so much better than a spade. Nathan says that if partner has the club ace then the clubs almost never go away so you don't need to lead one. Surely that is just as true in hearts? If partner has the AQ over the K surely we don't need to lead them. Malcolm Pryor can think himself genuinely unlucky since the clubs did go away when the 15-17NT opener had:

♠Kx ♥AKxx ♦AJxx ♣xxx

(yes that is a minimum with three low clubs) and declarer held

♠AQxx ♥x ♦KQxxxx ♣xx.

I note this breaks one of the assumptions that was made on the South hand, but there is a limit to what we can simulate.

**Hand 2**

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

South	West	North	East
		1♦	Pass
2♣	3♥	4♥ <sup>1</sup>	5♥
Pass	Pass	Dble	Pass
6♣ <sup>2</sup>	All Pass		

<sup>1</sup> short hearts, agreeing clubs, <sup>2</sup> Passing then pulling the double was a grand slam try

So the opponents are making grand slam tries. Pity they did not bid it – we would have known what to do! Now we have to decide on a lead.

(a) **♠5: 10 marks, ♠K: 7 marks.** The ♠ 5 is what Dave Robinson led against me on his way to crushing us in the Gerard Faulkner Salver. I am quite sure it is the right lead. You have one trick and need another. Where is that going to come from? If it is in hearts (highly unlikely) then you can cash it when you take the ace of trumps. If it is diamonds it is not going anywhere. Only a spade might disappear (as it would have done on diamond winners) so a spade it should be. Incidentally here you should lead the low spade. It might just give declarer a guess with say Q10 in the dummy and ace in hand. You only need one trick so the ♠Q in partner's hand is all you need (which is what partner had – well done partner!

(b) **any heart: 4 marks.** Unless the oppo are trying for grands missing two aces this will achieve nothing, but it is better than this...

(c) **any diamond: 1 mark.** It is highly unlikely that partner has a diamond trick and if they do, it will not go away. On the other hand partner might just have some holding like Qxx which would take declarer's guess away.

(d) **♣5: 3 marks, ♣A: 2 marks.** As I said in the previous hand, it is hardly ever right to lead trumps against freely bid slams, and there is no reason to do so here and plenty of reason not to. I give the ♣5 a slightly higher mark just in case partner has the singleton ♠K!

**Pairs Bonus: ♠5: 5 marks.** As I say every time a slam comes up, you never get many matchpoints if the opponents bid and make a slam, (and for sure this

one is not making an overtrick!). You have to go all out to beat it, so the same lead for the same reasons..

### Computer simulations – best lead:

♦4/2: 16.8% chance of defeating the contract (teams)

♦4/2: 1.17 tricks – highest average tricks taken with this lead (pairs proxy).

I am astonished at this result. Dave Robinson thought a spade was the right lead at the table, I think a spade is the right lead, every expert I have given it to thinks a spade is the right lead, it was the only winning lead at the table, yet the computer rates it as the worst lead at pairs and teams. I just don't know what to say!

**Hand 3**

♠ A 7 3  
 ♥ 7 6 5 3  
 ♦ J 6  
 ♣ K J 10 3

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

(a) **♠3: 10 marks, ♠A: 5 marks, ♠7: 1 mark.** I have said before that people do not lead dummy's second suit often enough against NTs, and from this unattractive collection it would be my choice. My friend, who clearly places too much faith in my advice, did lead this. It was a good news, bad news story in that dummy had Q98x and partner K10x. So partner had to put in the K and switch to a club to beat the hand. Well done! Unfortunately partner put in the 10 and that allowed declarer to win the jack and knock out the ♥A for a poor score. Ah well...

(b) **any heart: 1 mark.** Passive leads are all very well, but round into declarer's suit? No thanks!

(c) **♦J: 3 marks, ♦6: 2 marks.** Dummy will have five of these almost certainly, so this lead does not appeal.

(d) **♣J: 6 marks, ♣3: 2 marks, ♣K/10: 1 mark.** If I was not going to lead a spade it would be a club for me, and if I had five of them I would still lead a club, but here it just looks so likely declarer has

*Continued overleaf*



the AQ and we are giving away a cheap trick without much upside. Yes, sometimes declarer will have Qxx or Axx and a club is right, but it just seems anti-percentage.

**Pairs bonus: ♠3: 5 marks.** The same lead for the same reasons. A club is even less likely to be right at pairs.

### Computer simulations – best lead:

♥7/6/5/3: 4.8% chance of defeating the contract (teams)

♥7/6/5/3: 2.58 tricks – highest average tricks taken with this lead (pairs proxy)

Again I am amazed that the computer thinks a heart is best, and that it is passive. It just seems to me to be helping declarer build their tricks. I think this is a good example of the ‘computer effect’. At the table (OK one hand proves nothing, but at the table...) a low spade was fine, but we needed our double dummy computer opposite to put up the king and switch to a club. When our human partner played the ‘normal’ card that was a bottom. It pleases me that a heart lets the contract through as well when the two hands were

♠Jxx ♥QJ98x ♥Qxx ♠AQ  
opposite  
♠Q98x ♥K ♦AK109x ♣xxx.

I think Nathan's computer is talking to my computer and together they are in league to wind me up, since the computer results are steadily varying further and further away from my views, until in this set we are at almost total variance. Either I am going completely ga-ga (pause for nods of agreement from everyone in Manchester... continue) or something else is going on. I do think, that despite what Nathan says, the double dummy aspects of the analysis are perhaps underrated. No matter what we lead, our computer partner will *always* do the right thing - continuing the suit or switching as necessary. Declarer will get *every* two-way finesse right, *every* KJ guess right, drop *every* singleton king offside and play a double overtaking hippogriff squeeze without a second's thought. Such abilities are beyond us mere mortals (and if they are not then the Laws and Ethics Committee catches up with you sooner or later). I think this is much more important than is thought.

I am also interested in several of Nathan's comments. In particular that the computer leads passively against slams. This is in complete divergence to my constant advice and indeed in

complete divergence to universal expert practice that you *have* to lead aggressively against suit slams (with a few exceptions). Either the world's experts know nothing, or there is an odd discontinuity here. I am also interested that Nathan says it is difficult to get the assumptions for slam hands right. This seems counter-intuitive to the lay-person, but I am certainly not going to argue with Nathan on this – I merely note that two of the hands this month were slam hands.

The full results of the computer simulation can be found on page 72.

An appendix detailing the methodology can be found by clicking [here](#). □

## SEND IN YOUR LEAD PROBLEMS

Email the editor, [lou@ebu.co.uk](mailto:lou@ebu.co.uk). Alan will be delighted to use them if suitable.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO SEPTEMBER'S WINNERS:

Master: Robin Squire, London

Open: Danny Roth, Chigwell





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## LICENSED BRIDGE

**WHEN you see the 'LB' sign in an advertisement in the magazine, it means that:**

- The organisers of the holiday have applied for, and received, a licence from the EBU.
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- The bridge will be played in line with EBU regulations and bye-laws, thus affording all players the protection of playing within the jurisdiction of the EBU.

All county events advertised have an EBU licence.

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What do you think of when you hear the word 'Venice'? Perhaps its canals and gondoliers, or St. Marks Square, the Doge's Palace and expensive coffees, or tramezzini and a small glass of prosecco, or even Donna Leon and her detective, Commissario Guido Brunetti. Well, this October, you would have had to think about bridge, for the most recent EBU overseas congress was held in the tranquil Villa Pace Park Hotel, just north of Venice and close to the charming town of Treviso.

Sixteen tables of players gathered for the Congress programme which included a pre-congress pairs, a two-day Swiss pairs, two days of more relaxing bridge and then a two-day Swiss teams. The bridge room was ideal – roomy, well-lit, air-conditioned with a plentiful supply of still or sparkling water, all of which contributed to a positive, friendly atmosphere and some splendid bridge. The event

was organised and sponsored by First for Bridge, and everyone appreciated their hospitality at the welcome meeting and the end-of-congress reception. And for the final dinner, the hotel baked a special EBU cake.

Over forty players went on the day trip to Bassano del Grappa, a typical small Italian town of the Veneto. It is very picturesque, wedged in the Pedemontana hills facing the Alps and straddling the Brenta river with its characteristic wooden bridge. After a walking tour of the town and time for lunch, we were treated to a tasting of one of the areas products – grappa. Interestingly, the name of the town does not derive from the fact that it is a major grappa-producing centre but that it stands at the foot of the nearby Monte Grappa. Many of us also visited Treviso, a short bus or taxi ride away and a beautiful destination, with several historic palaces, medieval city walls, a maze of pretty canals and





narrow cobbled streets, and close to the Prosecco producing region. And of course, several of the players took the opportunity to spend a full day in Venice while one or two more adventurous travellers went to Padua, the site of the second oldest university in Italy. Unfortunately, a full day train and bus strike did curtail opportunities a bit.

The two Swiss events could not have been more different. In the Swiss pairs, Joy & Irving Blakey took an early lead and then sat at table one throughout the event. They won all their matches, ending with the phenomenal total of 174/200, and a lead of 50 VPs over the second pair, Karen Dewar & Adrian Fontes. They were never out of the lead, briefly sharing it after the second round with Chris Taylor & David Wing. In contrast, in the Swiss Teams, the Yorkshire team of Stuart Davies, Nichola Cockerill Smith, Catherine Thompson and Lesley Bridson led for much of the event, but never by a big margin and it was mathematically possible that they could be overtaken even in the last match.

This handin the Swiss Teams was a challenge for North. You are North. South is dealer and all vulnerable. Holding the hand shown, you consider

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

your opening bid – are you going to bid 2NT with the exposed club suit, or one of a suit, risking being passed out and missing a major suit game?

Your partner passes and West opens 1♣. That makes things much easier – you can show your hand with a double. East passes and partner bids 2♥. Great! Should you settle for 4♥ or try for a slam. Optimistically, you check for a slam and find that partner has one key card. What now? Our hero decided that there were lots of chances for 6♥ – if partner held any of three cards: ace of clubs, the ♠Q or the ♦J, then 6♥ should make. Alas, partner had none of these and was restricted to 11 tricks; three pairs risked 6♥, and only one made it. The rest of the room settled for a safe 4♥ +1.

It was very gratifying to see so many different winners of the various events. Their pictures and full ranking lists can be viewed on the EBU results page: [www.ebu.co.uk/results/1304](http://www.ebu.co.uk/results/1304). Congratulations to all the prize winners and thanks to the players whose friendliness, courtesy and patience made it such a rewarding event to direct.

We look forward to the next overseas congresses in March and October 2024 and hope to welcome you there. □



# Spring Overseas Congress

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## TRANSNATIONALS



The *Knottenbelt* team of Ben Handley-Pritchard, Michael Byrne, Maggie Knottenbelt, Stefano Tommasini, Tom Townsend & Ben Norton, (*pictured*) decisively won the third place play-off against the Barr team on the final day of the two-week championships to earn a bronze medal.

Also in the prizes were Artur Malinowski and former EBU member Lee Rosenthal whose team *Rosenthal* won the B Final of the Board-a-Match teams.

## NATIONAL HANDICAP PAIRS



Congratulations to Ann Field & Carol Duckett from Worthing Bridge Club, who finished first in the National Handicap Championship Pairs which took place in mid-September.

In second place were Karen Jones & Barbara Eastabrook from Ashton and District Bridge Club, with Gladys Gittins & Geoff Burbidge from Cambridge Bridge Club in third place.

Just over 300 pairs took part, playing in 15 clubs and counties both live and online.



## VILNIUS CUP



Congratulations to team Sushi who won the Vilnius Cup – Lithuania's 'Grand Prix' event. Antonio Palma, Nathalie Shashou, Nick Sandqvist & Frederic Wrang (*pictured from second left*) qualified in 6th place in the 32 team Swiss and then went undefeated through the star-studded final to claim first place.

## ONLINE ONE-DAY GREEN-POINTED SERIES

**Swiss Pairs - September** – Jun Nakamaru-Pinder & Paul Barton won with Janet Smith & John Gardner just one VP behind.

**Swiss Teams - October** – The winners were the *Shields* team, comprising Giles Ip & Alan Oddie, Garry Watson & Patrick Shields. In second place were Norman Selway & Kay Preddy playing with Louise Weiss-Selway & Florian Weiß-Selway.

## ONLINE KNOCKOUT TEAMS

The EBU's Online Knockout Teams competition has been won by the *Prior M* team. Players included Michael Prior, Mike Hampton, Norman Selway & Kay Preddy. They defeated the team of Roger Bryant, Stephen Green, Rob Helle, Ed Hoogenkamp & Gareth Roberts in the final.

## ONLINE ONE-DAY BLUE-POINTED SERIES

**Jack High** – The EBU national event was run by Cumbria CBA and played on RealBridge in early September. The morning session was jointly won by Rick Assad & Alison Gauld (N/S) and Clive Parnell & Sue Lent (E/W). The second placed pairs were Richard Acaster & Christine Benson and Paul Spencer & Ian Sidgwick.

## WORLD BRIDGE GAMES 2024

The World Bridge Games are expected to be held in Argentina. The EBU intends to enter teams of six to compete in the Open, Womens, Mixed and Seniors. All teams will be expected to participate on a fully self-funded basis. Depending on the number of entries there will either be a trial or a team will be selected by the EBU selection committee. [www.ebu.co.uk/article/world-bridge-games-2024](http://www.ebu.co.uk/article/world-bridge-games-2024)

## CROCKFORDS



The Crockfords Cup final took place in mid-September and was won by team *Leslie*. Sarah Bell, Stefano Tommasini, Ben Norton & Mike Bell (pictured from left) played in the final and Tim Leslie, not pictured, played in earlier rounds. The *Leslie* team won six matches in the final.

In second place was the *Jones* team comprising Trevor Ward, Rob Cliffe, David S Jones & Marc Smith. In third place was the *Hinden* team of John Athey, Neil Rosen, Graham Osborne & Frances Hinden (plus Tony Forrester & Chris Jagger who played in earlier rounds).

The Crockfords Plate – the consolation competition for those beaten in the first round of the Cup – was won by Tim Brierley, Graham Hartley, Harry Anoyrkatis & Jim Grant. They finished ahead of the second-placed team of Catherine Curtis, Paul Fegarty, Liam Fegarty & Jamie Fegarty.

## GREAT NORTHERN SWISS PAIRS



Steve Raine & Matt Brown (pictured) have won the Great Northern Swiss Pairs title in Leeds which took place in September.

Steve & Matt, finished ahead of Alan Hayward & Alan Jarvis. Just behind in third place were John Cox & Magnus Spence-Jones.

The 9-High Pairs was won by Meg Jenkins & Margaret Crowe over five matches. In second place were Ian Newsham & Pauline Stout and in joint third place were Ron Lasseter & Diane Lasseter and Cathy Wood & Michael Pointon.

## PLAYER OF THE YEAR 2022-23



Congratulations to Espen Erichsen, winner of the Player of the Year Championship for 2022-23.

The Championship awards points for finishing in the top positions of major competitions, and Erichsen topped the table with 46 points after winning four of the events – the Autumn Congress, Premier League, Point-a-Board teams and Spring Fours, and finishing in third place in the Gold Cup.

The full list of points scorers, and information on the 2023-24 competition, which restarted with the Gold Cup finals, can be seen on the Player of the Year page: [www.ebu.co.uk/competitions/player-of-the-year-championship](http://www.ebu.co.uk/competitions/player-of-the-year-championship)

		Gold Points
1	Espen Erichsen	46
2	Tom Paske	38
3	Andrew McIntosh	36
4=	Ben Norton	33
4=	Stefano Tommasini	33
6	Peter Crouch	32
7	Richard Plackett	30
8=	Andrew Black	28
8=	David Gold	28
10	Gunnar Hallberg	25

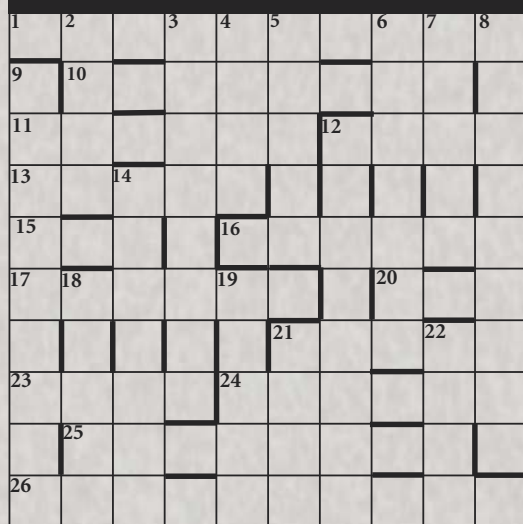


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this magazine when you  
have finished with it**

# CROSSWORD NO 41

Compiled by MERMEN

Answers online, p73



## ACROSS

- 1 What a printer might be doing when looking to balance her books (10)
- 10 Player in happy revelatory moment (8)
- 11 One preparing to lay an egg enters with difficulty (6)
- 12 Cornish river will ultimately ebb (4)
- 13 Flash jacket not quite finished (5)
- 15 A devil to score (3)
- 16 Muslim city where maiden was abused (6)
- 17 Withdraw from trade and head for pastures new (6)
- 20 With little intention to honour (3)
- 21 Keen to lead exercises on vault (5)
- 23 Head back from first shed in state (4)
- 24 One's persuaded by cable to the queen (6)
- 25 Heraldic device's terrible collapse ( 8)
- 26 One intruding upon France's very outdated king (10)

## DOWN

- 2 Sense of life elevated somewhat (4)
- 3 Biz that's struggling to provide therapeutic facility (8, two words)
- 4 Part of modern pentathlete's kit recovered from the sweeper-up (4)
- 5 Trinity put out there (5)
- 6 It's madness to ignore player's senselessness (7)
- 7 Using only new material... (5)
- 8 ... daring everyone to get into bridge (9)
- 9 I had bus crash into the one elephant in the auction... (5,4)
- 12 A liberal defers to union supporters (8)
- 14 Satisfy program with no difficulty (7)
- 18 Compound discovered in Chesterfield (5)
- 19 American race horse came back to go over the same ground again (5)
- 21 Pass on a soft drink (4)
- 22 Spanish guy with pipe I mistook for player (4)

# CAPTION COMPETITION



Send your entries for the cartoon above to [lou@ebu.co.uk](mailto:lou@ebu.co.uk) or Editor, Raggett House, Langport, Somerset, TA10 0DD by 12th January.

Thank you for all the captions I received for the one below. Congratulations to Peter Farmer for my favourite, shown beneath the picture. Other close contenders were Frank Fallon's 'Would you like some unauthorised information about that one?'; Fraser McLeod's 'They played in 6♣ on a 3-2 fit and called it Precision Bidding'; and Tracy Rowland's 'There's Peter. He only had one suit, but I took him out anyway'.



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## FORTNUM & MASON

EST 1707





# Club Bidding Quiz

by Julian Pottage



## Julian's answers to questions from page 9

**Hand 1**  
 ♠ 5 3  
 ♥ –  
 ♦ A Q J 8 3  
 ♣ K Q J 6 5 2

W	N	E	S
			4♥
?			

**4NT.** This is the unusual no trump at a high level. Bidding 4NT over an opposing 4♥ opening does not ask for aces. Instead it shows both minors. Since you are asking partner to bid at the five level, you need good shape (5-5 as an absolute minimum) and good playing strength, which this hand has.

**Hand 2**  
 ♠ Q J 10 6  
 ♥ 9 7  
 ♦ A 7 4  
 ♣ A 8 7 2

W	N	E	S
		1♠	3♥
?			

**4♠.** Had there been no overcall, you would have made a limit raise to 3♠. Given that you can still bid 3♠, why do you do something different? The answer is that if you would have raised to 2♠ without the overcall you would surely bid 3♠ now, so with a sound raise you likewise have to bid a level higher, here 4♠ instead of 3♠.

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

W	N	E	S
		3♦	Dble
?			

**4♦.** Holding support for partner's pre-emptive suit, you can make life even more difficult for the opponents by raising the level. If you had four-card support, you could go all the way to 5♦; with three-card support the simple raise is adequate. You intend to let the opponents play in whatever they bid, hoping they have misjudged.

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

W	N	E	S
			4♥
?			

**Pass.** Although you would have opened the bidding, you do not have a suitable positive action available. A double would show a sound opening bid, which you just about have, and a preparedness for partner to bid 4♠, which you do not. The hand is also far too flat for bidding 4NT for the minors – compare with Hand 1.

**Hand 5**  
 ♠ A 8 5  
 ♥ K 9 7 3  
 ♦ 10 9 4 2  
 ♣ Q 4

W	N	E	S
	1♦	2NT <sup>1</sup>	3♦
?			

<sup>1</sup> Lowest two suits, 5+ 5+

**4♥.** You have only nine points – but what great points they are. You have four-card heart support (2NT showed at least five-five in the rounded suits remember) and fitting honours in both of partner's suits. In addition, since the opponents are bidding diamonds, your ♠A is most unlikely to be facing a void and is a good card too.

**Hand 6**  
 ♠ A K J 9 4 2  
 ♥ A K Q 6  
 ♦ 6 5  
 ♣ J

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	3♠	Pass
?			

**4♣.** You have great playing strength and envisage a slam. There are surely no losers in the majors, so you just need partner to cover two of your three possible losers in the minors. Lacking a diamond control, it would be wrong to check on aces just yet. Instead first cuebid 4♣ and see whether partner can make a return cuebid of 4♦. □



# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send your letters to the editor, Lou Hobhouse, Raggett House, Bowdens, TA10 0DD, or e-mail [lou@ebu.co.uk](mailto:lou@ebu.co.uk)  
The editor reserves the right to condense letters. Publication does not mean the EBU agrees with the views expressed or that the comments are factually correct.

## CORONATION COVER

I think Mr Fletcher (*Letters, Sep 2023*) may find himself in a minority of one considering the May cover overtly monarchist and religious.

I did not read a political statement in the cover and I am sure the EBU did not intend one. The cover was a colourful and well designed expression of what was a very joyous and happy occasion. Roll on Christmas.

*Neil Cumming*

## GRADING ARTICLES

I have received the September magazine. I always look forward to it but I was reminded when I opened it that one aspect always irritates me. It is the description of the 'green' articles as having a 'tame' difficulty. I think this is pejorative. While I am not a bridge genius – I guess I am about average with a NGS of 9 – I always read the green articles and usually found something of use. Personally, I think the colour coding is sufficient and no words are needed. But if words are included don't use 'tame'.

*David Rawsthorn*

*I think you're right! I have left them in this issue so people can see what you are talking about. Come February, it may be different. Ed*

## BEST BRIDGE NAMES

I have researched the best names for bridge!

- ❖ Just less than 50% of Norths have an NGS of 50% or above;
- ❖ Only 33% of Souths have an NGS of 50% or above;
- ❖ 100% of Easts are less than 50%;
- ❖ 42.5% of Wests have 50% or more;
- ❖ Almost 60% of Kings are above 50%;
- ❖ 100% of Queens are above 50%;
- ❖ 25% of Jacks are above 50%.

It follows that you should find a partner named Queen who sits North and avoid a partner called Jack who sits East.

*Dave Robinson*

## O UMLAUT

My wife can't read anything without spotting a typo, and I seem to have fallen victim to the same disease! Have a look at David Bird's fiction in the May edition (pages 20 and 21). Stefan Götel's name has the 'ö' umlaut in a different font to the rest of the word, every time (three?) it appears in the article. You could correct it in the online version, if you have a quiet moment. My eyesight must be better than I thought.

*Dave Simmons*

*Thanks for pointing it out. It is hard to see on screen. All better now having sorted out a small glitch on my new computer. Ed*

## NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE?

How sad to read the full page of Landmark Promotions in the last issue.

Congratulations to everyone on their achievement. Sad, because in a game enjoyed by millions across the country, there is a huge North-South divide. In a page full of winners, we find: Cumbria – 1 Master; Westmorland – 1 Master; and North East – 1 Master.

This is not the fault of the EBU, but it perhaps reflects accurately the nation state.

*Jimmy Walsh*

*But check out Yorkshire! Ed*

## TOP CLUBS

The list of top ten clubs (and the longer top 50 online) makes for interesting reading. I was slightly surprised to see a fairly local club appear in the latter but noted they run many face to face as well as online games. Bromley North BC can only run one session per week but is well attended. It would be interesting to see a list of top clubs based on a single session or based on their average attendance.

*Dave Harper*

## A FEW WORDS WILL DO

Michael Byrne's articles on reverse bidding (*May & Sep 2022*) gave the following

description: 'A reverse bid is where you open with one of a suit and rebid two of a suit with the corollary that the second suit is higher ranking than the first and that you go past two of your original suit without making a jump bid ...'

One must conclude that a sequence such as 1♠-2♦, 3♣ cannot be a reverse as the second suit is not higher-ranking than the first, and it is not made at the two level. Of course it is patently untrue. Such a sequence is known as a **high** reverse, which gets no mention whatsoever. Indeed his definition of a reverse only concerns the low reverse and takes 46 words to do so.

Eric Crowhurst, in his classic book *Precision Acoll* (1974) covers both types of reverse in just 33 words, 'If opener bids two suits in such an order that his partner is forced to go to the three level in order to express simple preference for the first, then opener has reversed.' **Laurie Jackson**

## GOBBLEDYGOOK

I thought I would add some gobble-de-gook [sic] from the May edition this year. Page 52 says '... N/S got to 6NT doubled by North'. I suppose doubling your own contract is a novel way to improve your score. *Lottie received the lead of a small heart and finessed the 10 losing to the jack.* Do the laws now allow declarer's right-hand opponent to make the opening lead?

**Laurie Jackson**

*It could certainly be clearer and you should join our proofreading team. The contract was 6NT doubled, **played** by North. We don't rotate the hands in match reports so the lead correctly comes from East.* **Ed**

# Landmark Promotions

August – September 2023

## Congratulations to the newly-promoted

### Grand Master:

Alan Brosigill, Yorkshire

### Avon

#### Life Master

Jan Duncan

#### Master

Paul Brown

Fiona Herlihy

Bill Ray

### Berks. & Bucks.

#### Life Master

Malcolm Burch

#### Regional Master

Don Collier

#### Master

Yvette Tinlin

Mary Turpin

### Cambs & Hunts

#### Master

Ed Graham

Bettie Sweet

### Channel Islands

#### Regional Master

Julie Evemy

### Cumbria

#### Master

Joan Taylor

### Direct Overseas

#### Regional Master

Thomas Charlsen

### Gloucestershire

#### Master

Alastair Catchpole

Robert Newman

### Hants & I.O.W.

#### Master

Michael Battison

### Isle of Man

#### Life Master

Andy Elliott

#### Regional Master

Jascha Garre

### Kent

#### Master

Giacoma Benfadhel

Rosemary English

Dave Russell

Pat Welsh

Alec Womar

### Lancashire

#### Master

Christine Welch

### London

#### Master

Yuki Bruce

Isabelle Morresi

### Manchester

#### Master

Michelle Rosenberg

### Merseyside/Cheshire

#### Master

Beryl Webster

### Middlesex

#### Regional Master

Cathryn Barley

### Norfolk

#### Master

Barbara Baker

Sarah Barker

Bob Hasell

### Notts

#### Master

Sue Daniel

Bibi Sohawon

### Oxfordshire

#### Master

Jean Maisey

Erika Syba

### Somerset

#### Master

Stephen Banks

### Staffs & Shrops

#### Master

John Whiteman

### Suffolk

#### Master

Jaroslav Grochowski

Laurie Robinson

### Surrey

#### Life Master

Tim Warren

#### Master

Paul Dibbs

Joy Heron

Robin Holmes

David Mannooch

### Sussex

#### Regional Master

Guy Davies

#### Master

Andrew Briggs

Peter Revell

### Warwickshire

#### Life Master

Gareth Roberts

#### Master

Judith Kleiner

Lorna Spenser

Carol Warren

Oliver Winters

### Yorkshire

#### Grand Master

Alan Brosigill

#### Regional Master

David Alderson

#### Master

Ian Hinchliff

Rosie Hinchliff

Ron Lasseter

Graham Mustin

John Wheatley



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Feb 28	8 & 15	Bridge & Bowls in Paphos	★★★★	Mark Hooper	£745
Mar 4	8	EBU Tunisia Congress	★★★★★	Chris & Linda Benneworth	£895
Mar 11	5	Bridge in Harrogate, North Yorkshire	★★★★	Colin Simcox	£495
Apr 12	11	Five Star Bridge in Port El Kantaoui	★★★★★	Sarah Amos	£1295*
Apr 14	5	Bridge on the Edge of the Cotswolds	★★★★	Chris & Linda Benneworth	£440
Apr 21	6	Play Bridge & Explore the West Coast of Ireland	★★★★	Barry & Maggie Watts	£1050*
May 4	8	Bridge at the Kernos Beach Hotel, Crete	★★★★	Chris & Linda Benneworth	£1295*
May 19	12	Bridge in Herceg Novi, Montenegro	★★★★	Mark Hooper	£1595*
Jun 2	8	Play Bridge & Explore the Bay of Kotor	★★★★	James & Jane Tullett	£1245*
Jun 24	5	Bridge in Suffolk, Ufford Park Resort	★★★★	TBC	£545
Jul 7	6	Bridge, Norfolk Broads & Sandringham	★★★★	TBC	£750
Jul 14	8	Play Bridge & Explore the Legendary Rhine Valley	★★★★	James & Jane Tullett	£1375*
Aug 12	5	Bridge & the Charming Cotswolds	★★★	TBC	£525
Sep 1	8	Play Bridge & Explore the French Château & Alps	★★★	John & Sarah Barker	£1375*
Sep 21	8	Bridge, Lido di Jesolo & Venice	★★★★	Mark Hooper	£1395*
Oct 2	8	Bridge in Sicily at the Acacia Resort	★★★★	Sarah Amos	£1395*
Oct 10	8	Bridge at the Luxurious Château Bela, Slovakia	★★★★	Christine & Stewart MacFarlane	£1420*
Nov 3	8 & 15	Bridge at the Raga Side, Turkey	★★★★★	Colin Simcox	£795
Nov 4	5	Bridge Retreat at the Dartmouth Hotel, Golf & Spa	★★★	Eddie & Kathy Williams	£545

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## Another one I got wrong!

The deal below came up while playing in the daily Drop-in Drop-out MP Tournament. You can play up to 96 boards in a day (and some actually do!) in rounds of four boards each, and with any number of partners against randomly drawn opponents. If you play 16 or more boards, you qualify for the leader board. On this deal I was sitting South:

Love All. Dealer East

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

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

West	North	East	South
Pass	2♣ <sup>1</sup>	1♣	1♥
All Pass		Dble	4♥

<sup>1</sup> Unassuming Cuebid, showing 3+ hearts and 10+ HCP

East appeared to have doubled simply because the opponents had the audacity to bid the suit he had shown. It's worth having a partnership agreement about doubling and passing over a UCB.

Most declarers made 12 tricks, but I made 11. West led the ♣3 and I fell at the starting block by playing the ♣K. If I had put a smaller club on, East won't know who started with the ♣Q. After all, West had not supported clubs. Most Easts went up with the ♣A over a small club from table, but even

if East gets it right by playing the ♣J, my partner showed me how 12 tricks are still cold. If I take the next ten tricks by playing out trumps and spades ending in dummy and I come down to the ♦2 and the ♠K in dummy and ♦A9 in hand, East will be squeezed as he cannot hold on to more than two of ♦KQ and ♣A. It just needs East to have started with the ♦KQJ and the ♣A. ☐

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# Funbridge Competitions

by Marc Smith

## Playing on Autopilot

We often make the instinctive play without first thinking thorough the whole deal, so it is hardly surprising to find that robot players can fall into the same trap. For a change, you are defending on this deal from a Funbridge IMP game. You are in the East seat, but would you have seen the winning defensive play had the polarities been reversed?

**N/S Game. Dealer South. IMPs**

♠ J 3  
♥ K J 5  
♦ A  
♣ K Q J 10 7 5 2

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

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

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

Diagram showing a diamond suit with North (N) and South (S) labels, and West (W) and East (E) labels.

West	North	East	South
Pass	2NT	Pass	2♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	3♠

South opened a natural weak 2♠ and North advanced with a 2NT enquiry. Playing Ogust responses, South's 3♠ bid showed a maximum with a good suit and North duly raised to game.

Your robot leads the ♦J against South's 4♠. Declarer wins with dummy's ace, plays a trump to the ace, ruffs a diamond in dummy, and leads the ♣K. You win with the ♣A and return a club. Your

partner ruffs and, realising (assuming human thought processes) that the defence needs to take two heart tricks to beat the contract, leads a low heart, putting declarer to the guess.

Of course, declarer guesses right, rising with the ♥K. Having taken the winning view, declarer then exits with a second round of hearts. Irrespective of which defender wins the heart exit, declarer can win the next trick, draw the outstanding trumps, and claim the rest of the tricks: N/S +420.

Do you see how the contract could have been defeated?

'I would have led my singleton at trick one,' you may say, but that does not help. Indeed, it illustrates why avoiding the instinctive play is so difficult. To defeat declarer's game, West must not ruff when the second round of clubs is played. With the defenders still needing three tricks, suppose dummy is allowed to win the second round of clubs. What can declarer do?

If a heart is led from dummy, the defenders will score two tricks in that suit with their trump trick still to come. If, instead, declarer plays a third round of clubs, East can ruff with the ♠Q. West will subsequently make the ♥A and his natural trump trick with the ♠10. Either way, the defenders score four tricks.

Ruffing a winner with what appears to be an otherwise valueless trump seems like the natural thing to do. Only by stopping and projecting the subsequent play might a defender see that doing the instinctive thing is wrong. The robot was not up to finding such a defence. I hope I would have seen the winning play if I had been in the West seat, but that is something we can never know! □



# Michael Byrne's Quiz from page 20

**Y**ou are sitting North. It is Game All and West opens 3♣. What is your call?

West	North	South	East
3♣	?		

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

## ANSWERS

**Hand 1** should overcall 3♠, hoping to get to game in that suit or perhaps find hearts later on. It would be wrong to double, as partner might pass on a nothing hand with Qxxx clubs only to find that you had a good spade fit all along. (For example if partner is 3 3 3 4 they might think your side doesn't even have an 8-card fit let alone a 9-card one!)

**Hand 2** should pass. You have 14 good points, and you aren't a million miles away from trying 3NT but there is no guarantee that partner will have anything to help you in diamonds, and if you are making game then surely partner can rustle up a protective double in the pass out seat. The ♣9 suggests you will have an easy plus score from defending 3♣, and leave yourself well placed if partner does bid.

**Hand 3** should double, horrible though it is. You have a 15-count and a serious risk of missing game if you pass, as partner won't bid with, say

♠Q10xxx ♥10xx ♦Axxx ♣x

or similar. It's true if partner responds 3♦ to your double then you'll wish you could crawl back into bed, but the upside of bidding (that you might reach game or slam) easily outweighs the downside (that partner won't have very much).

**Hand 4** should overcall 3NT (yes, really). You have eight solid tricks, and only need a little bit of magic from partner to let you make nine tricks. The trouble with overcalling 3♦ is that you don't describe your enormous playing strength (a 3♦ overcall would suggest a 6-card suit and nearly opening values), and you might miss game. It also makes it easier for the opponents to introduce a major suit, which may cloud the issue of getting to 3NT. (For example partner won't bid 3NT over 3♠ with just a spade stop, as he won't have a club stop, and might not hold a good hand).

If the opponents cash a lot of spades against you then perhaps you have kept them out of a contract making their way.

**Hand 5** should bid 4♣ to show the major suits. It's true you are forcing to game with 'only' a 13-count, but you hold enormous playing strength and need as little as

♠xxxx ♥xx ♦xxxx ♣xxx

to have a chance of making ten tricks and I think we can all agree that you are entitled to more than a Yarborough from partner! ☐

# India's Quiz on suit responses from p10

**Quiz:** What should you respond when your partner has opened 1♠, with no intervening bid from the opposition?

<b>Hand 1</b> ♠ 5 4 ♥ 4 3 ♦ 10 6 3 ♣ K Q J 7 5 2	<b>Hand 2</b> ♠ J 4 ♥ Q J 3 ♦ A K 6 3 ♣ 10 8 7 2	<b>Hand 3</b> ♠ 5 4 ♥ 4 3 ♦ 10 6 3 ♣ A K J 10 5 2
<b>Hand 4</b> ♠ 5 4 ♥ Q 3 2 ♦ 10 6 3 ♣ A Q J 5 2	<b>Hand 5</b> ♠ 7 5 4 ♥ A K 4 3 ♦ K J 2 ♣ 10 6 3	<b>Hand 6</b> ♠ 5 4 ♥ 3 ♦ Q J 8 4 3 ♣ A K 10 5 2

**Quiz:** What should you respond when your partner has opened 1♥, with no intervening bid from the opposition?

<b>Hand 7</b> ♠ A K 6 4 3 ♥ J 3 ♦ A 5 2 ♣ K 8 5	<b>Hand 8</b> ♠ Q 4 ♥ J 10 6 3 ♦ K Q 7 4 3 ♣ K 3	<b>Hand 9</b> ♠ Q 4 ♥ Q J 6 4 ♦ A 7 5 3 ♣ Q 10 7
<b>Hand 10</b> ♠ K J 5 4 ♥ 3 2 ♦ 10 3 ♣ A Q J 5 2	<b>Hand 11</b> ♠ Q 10 7 5 ♥ 10 6 ♦ A K 7 3 ♣ K 8 2	<b>Hand 12</b> ♠ K J 4 2 ♥ 8 7 ♦ 9 4 ♣ K Q 10 5 2

**Hand 1 – Respond 1NT.** Your club suit is quite sturdy but the defenders will be able to duck with the ace enough times to cut off your hand and there will be no entries to get back.

**Hand 2 – Respond 2♣.** You have the points to change suit at the two level and should show the cheapest of your four-card suits. Don't be led astray by the suit quality!

**Hand 3 – Respond 2♣.** Even if the club finesse fails, you will be providing your partner with five tricks; plus, the suit itself will hopefully provide an entry, even assuming the worst-case scenario that your partner is holding just two small clubs.

**Hand 4 – Respond 1NT.** Your clubs are quite nice but will often produce only three or four tricks. After that there is no certain entry back. The ♥Q is far from a certain entry.

**Hand 5 – Respond 2♣.** You cannot bid 2♥ as you only have four, nor can you support spades with only three. Better to pretend you have clubs, creating a low-level force. If you end up in no trumps you may have diverted the opposition from a club lead.

**Hand 6 – Respond 2♦.** Remember to show the higher of two five-card suits first.

**Hand 7 – Respond 1♠.** No need to jump to 2♠ to show strength as 1♠ is forcing.

**Hand 8 – Respond 3♥.** The priority is to tell your partner about your 8-card major fit! Why tell the opponents you have diamonds when you plan to play in hearts anyway?

**Hand 9 – Respond 3♥.** Again, prioritise showing your major fit rather than wondering about playing in no trumps. 3NT only gives you +400 or +600, whereas 4♥ will give you +420 or +620; not only that but partner will often have five hearts here, making 4♥ a much safer contract.

**Hand 10 – Respond 2♣.** You have the luxury of 11 points, so you should show your longest suit first, intending to show spades next, if it's still appropriate.

**Hand 11 – 1♠.** Don't fall into the trap of responding in the lower-ranking of your four-card suits; although spades is a higher-ranking suit than diamonds, it is *cheaper* to bid spades at this point in the auction. You can respond *one* spade rather than *two* diamonds. Cheaper is not always lower-ranking.

**Hand 12 – Respond 1♠.** You don't have enough points to change suit at the two level and bid your longest suit, but 1NT would deny four spades.

## Revision

**Quiz 1:** What should you respond with these 4-HCP hands when partner opens 1♦?

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

**Hand 1. Pass.** What's the point? Playing in diamonds is unlikely to be a disaster and there is no guarantee that your measly collection of queens and jacks will provide a trick.

**Hand 2. 1♠.** An ace is definitely a trick!

**Hand 3. 1♠.** With five spades headed by the king, there is a real chance you have a trick and you have a decent major suit to offer as trumps.

**Quiz 2:** What should you respond when your partner opens 1♥?

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

**Hand 4. 2♥.** Preferable to 1NT for its pre-emptive value, ease of finding a 5-3 fit and potential for ruffing a spade in the short hand.

**Hand 5. 1♠.** Since you don't have a definite heart fit, see whether your partner can show support for the other major.

**Hand 6. 2♥.** Yes, you are 3-4-3-3; but you have a definite 8-card heart fit.

**Quiz 3:** Should you raise to 2♣ or bid something else when partner opens 1♣?

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

**Hand 7. Bid 1♥.** It is better to look for an 8-card heart fit than to commit to a 9-card club fit. A *major* fit is the holy grail in bridge.

**Hand 8. Bid 1♥.** Suit quality is not a requirement here; you are simply promising 4+ hearts and a few values.

**Hand 9. Bid 2♣.** You are balanced but there is a real chance that playing in clubs might be better than no trumps, as you have a 9-card fit and a doubleton in spades.

**Quiz 4:** What should you respond to partner's opening 1♦?

Hand 10	Hand 11	Hand 12
♠ 5 4 3 2 ♥ K Q 6 ♦ 6 4 ♣ J 10 9 5	♠ K 7 2 ♥ 5 ♦ Q 5 3 ♣ Q 8 7 6 3 2	♠ 8 4 3 ♥ A 8 6 ♦ 10 7 5 ♣ Q J 8 2

**Hand 10. 1♠.** The 1NT bid denies a 4-card major but you have four spades; despite the poor quality you should bid 1♠ instead of 1NT.

**Hand 11. 1NT.** It does not matter that you are unbalanced – you are not good enough to change suit at the two level.

**Hand 12. 1NT.** Again, your suit is clubs, which you cannot bid at the one level; the fact that you happen to be balanced is irrelevant, although this hand looks very different from Hand 11 which also responded 1NT. □

# Paul Bowyer's Quiz from page 12

## Q1

**Hand 1**  
South plays in 6♠.  
West leads the ♣Q.

W	N	E	S
		Pass	2♣
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	6♠

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



♠ A K Q 8 7 2  
♥ 4 2  
♦ A K  
♣ A K 2

You may not care for the bidding, but there we are. 6♠ is not unreasonable, after all. West leads the ♣Q against your slam. How should you play the hand?  
Spoiler alert! East has the ♥A.

## ANSWER

The key play here is not to draw trumps as the ♠J109 may well be needed for entries to dummy. Taking the ♣A at trick one, you should immediately lead a heart, hoping West has the ♥A. If not, you may be able to ruff out the long hearts. When East has the ♥A, he will take the trick and play a trump (aware of the need to remove dummy's entries).

You win that, (it doesn't matter where) and play off the ♥K and ruff a heart (high). Now a trump to dummy and ruff another heart (high).

With the last heart on table a winner, you can cross to the ♠J, drawing the last trump, and cash the fifth heart, discarding your club loser.

Here's the full deal:

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

[click to  
play  
online](#)

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

♠ 6 5 3  
♥ A 10  
♦ 10 8 5 4 3  
♣ 9 6 4

♠ A K Q 8 7 2  
♥ 4 2  
♦ A K  
♣ A K 2

Question 2 overleaf

# Paul Bowyer's Quiz from page 12

## Q2

Hand 2  
South plays in 6♠.  
West leads the ♣J.

W	N	E	S
	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♦
Pass	6♠	All Pass	

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



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

Another 2♣ auction to a decent, but far from laydown, slam.

West leads the ♣J to East's ♣A and a club is returned to dummy's king. How might you make this one against a 4-2 heart split and a 4-1 trump break?

## ANSWERS

This deal (played unsuccessfully many times, incidentally) has proved difficult to see. You need to set up dummy's long heart suit, and that means taking two heart ruffs in hand. Winning trick two on the table, you should play off the ♥A and ruff a heart low. Back to dummy with a trump and then ruff a low heart with the ace of trumps.

All the hearts are now good, so you can play your last (small) trump to dummy, draw the rest of the trumps and dummy is high.

The commonest mistake was to play off the ♥A K early – now the hand cannot be made.

Here's the full deal:



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

[click to  
play  
online](#)

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



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

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



# COMPUTER SIMULATION OF MAY LEADS QUIZ RESULTS

By Nathan Piper

## Hand 1

♠ J 10 9 4 2  
♥ 8 4 2  
♦ 10  
♣ K 10 9 2

South	West	North	East
		1NT <sup>1</sup>	Pass
3♦ <sup>2</sup>	Pass	4NT <sup>3</sup>	Pass
5♠ <sup>4</sup>	Pass	6♦	All Pass

<sup>1</sup>15-17. <sup>2</sup> Natural slam try. <sup>3</sup> RKC.B. <sup>4</sup> 2KC+♦Q.

## ASSUMPTIONS

**South** has at least 12 HCP and at least six diamonds without a 4-card major. South has two key cards plus the ♦Q.

**North** has 15-17 HCP, is balanced with at least three diamonds (at least four unless 17 points) and at least two keycards.

**East** has no 8-card suit.

### Best lead in each suit:

♥4 25.3%, 1.01 tricks \*

♥2 25.3%, 1.01 tricks \*

♠J 24.9%, 1.01 tricks

♦10 22.5%, 0.96 tricks

♣10 22.2%, 0.87 tricks

### Other leads:

♥8 25.3%, 1.00 tricks

♠10 24.9%, 1.01 tricks

♠9 24.9%, 1.01 tricks

♠4 23.1%, 0.97 tricks

♠2 23.1%, 0.97 tricks

♣9 22.2%, 0.87 tricks

♣2 21.5%, 0.86 tricks

♣K 18.2%, 0.78 tricks

## Comments:

It's difficult to simulate slam hands as the features that make a hand good for slam are easy to describe loosely but hard to code up precisely. How we estimate the bidding is key. If North is a sound bidder then he'll have second round control of each unbid suit (or would have bid 4♦ rather than 4NT). In that case we can rule out a club lead. On the other hand if North is a basher then there could be a hole in clubs. Alan tells me that at the table North didn't have the ♣A so we'll assume that we know North to be a basher – thereby giving the aggressive club lead a fair chance.

Partner has the ♠A 11.02% of the time, but the AK only stand up 8.7% of the time. Further, a ♣ lead will only be necessary to beat the contract less than 0.2% of the time. Perhaps even more surprisingly, virtually all of these cases are when partner doesn't have the ace, but has the queen over dummy's jack. That's because if there are two quick club losers they almost never go away (or when they do it's the 2nd undertrick). Against that a club lead costs the contract when some other lead would have broken it 12.4% of the time. That's huge. So a club is worst even if partner might have the ace.

The passive major suit leads both give us a good chance that the contract will drift off without our assistance. A heart does better than the more obvious-looking spade simply because when partner has a magic holding (AQ over the king or king over the ace with a side winner) the declarer is less likely to ruff the second round if we lead our shorter suit. We can cash two hearts immediately 2.5% of the time, whereas we can cash two spades immediately only 1.1% of the time.

Something the simulator doesn't allow for is that a heart lead may pick up partner's queen (double-dummy declarers guess rather well). Many players are terrified of this possibility so let's quantify the risk. On this hand declarer only has a two-way finesse in hearts 1.8% of the time and half of those times declarer guesses right. Even if we assume that declarer always needs the two-way finesse for the contract (ie they can't discard a heart loser on some other suit) this correction still makes a heart 0.1% better than a spade.

Cont/. . .

**Hand 2**

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

South	West	North	East
		1♦	Pass
2♣	3♥	4♥ <sup>1</sup>	5♥
Pass	Pass	Dble	Pass
6♣ <sup>2</sup>	All Pass		

<sup>1</sup> short hearts, agreeing clubs, <sup>2</sup> Passing then pulling the double was a grand slam try

**ASSUMPTIONS**

**North** has at most four spades, at most one heart, at least four diamonds and at least four clubs, but not x·x·4·5 or x·x·6+·6+. North has between 12 and 16 HCP.

**South** has at least five clubs, and at most four diamonds, at least 16 HCP, no ♠A (or would have bid 5♠ over 5♥).

**East** has at least four hearts and not 8+ spades.

**Best lead in each suit:**

♦4 16.8%, 1.17 tricks \*

♦2 16.8%, 1.17 tricks \*

♥10 14.5%, 1.15 tricks

♣A 14.4%, 1.15 tricks

♠K 9.9%, 1.11 tricks

**Other leads:**

♥5 14.5%, 1.15 tricks

♥3 14.5%, 1.15 tricks

♥2 14.5%, 1.15 tricks

♥Q 14.5%, 1.15 tricks

♥9 14.5%, 1.15 tricks

♥7 14.5%, 1.15 tricks

♠5 9.9%, 1.10 tricks

♣5 6.5%, 1.07 tricks

**Comments:**

I have only moderate confidence in this result as it's hard to specify precisely what hands would constitute a grand slam try. That said, whatever assumptions we tried led to the same ranking order of results.

The simulator normally leads passively against slams so I'm not surprised that the red suits come out on top. Why is leading declarer's first bid suit better than leading our 11+ card fit? Because on 2.4% of deals, partner has a singleton diamond and 2+ clubs. That's quite a lot in context and certainly much more than the infinitesimal chance that partner's ♥A stands up.

Mightn't a diamond lead pick up partner's queen? It's true that the simulator's double-dummy declarer always guesses right so this should be factored in – but it turns out not to be significant. Partner has Qxx(x) with the AK divided and South having 2+ diamonds on only 2.1% of deals. The guess won't be necessary on all of these deals and, where it is, declarer will guess right half the time anyway. As a general rule, we shouldn't fear picking up partner's honours.

Is a spade really so bad? Can't partner have the queen so that we get to cash it when in with the ♣A? Yes of course this could happen – and in fact a spade is necessary to defeat the contract on a healthy 2.7% of hands. The trouble is that it costs the contract when some other lead would have worked on 9.7% of hands. Further, it gives the contract away when all 11 other leads would have worked on 1.8% of hands.

*Continued overleaf*

**CROSSWORD NO 41**

Compiled by MERMAN

Answers from p60

1	O	2	F	F	3	S	4	E	5	T	T	6	I	7	N	8	G
9	U	10	E	P	I	P	H	A	N	Y	A						
11	N	E	S	T	E	R	12	F	A	L	L						
13	B	L	14	A	Z	E	E	E	N	O	L						
15	I	M	P	B	16	M	E	D	I	N	A						
17	D	18	E	P	A	19	R	T	E	20	T	E	N				
	S	S	E	T	E	21	C	R	Y	22	P	T					
23	U	T	A	H	24	C	O	A	X	E	R						
	I	25	E	S	C	A	L	L	O	P	Y						
26	T	R	E	S	P	A	S	S	E	R							

**Hand 3**

♠ A 7 3

♥ 7 6 5 3

♦ J 6

♣ K J 10 3

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

**ASSUMPTIONS**

**South** has 13-15 HCP balanced or semi-balanced with at most three spades, 4-5 hearts and at most three diamonds. South has five hearts only if balanced with a double club stop. South has at least one stopper in clubs.

**North** has 12-17 HCP with an unbalanced hand with 4+ diamonds, exactly four spades, at most three hearts and at most four clubs. North is not 4:3:5:1 and 12-14 (or would raise 1♥ to 2♥).

**East** has no overcall or pre-empt in spades, hearts or clubs, no two-suited overcall and no TOX.

**Best lead in each suit:**

♥6 4.8%, 2.58 tricks \*

♥5 4.8%, 2.58 tricks \*

♥3 4.8%, 2.58 tricks \*

♥7 4.8%, 2.58 tricks \*

♠A 4.0%, 2.41 tricks

♦J 3.9%, 2.49 tricks

♣J 3.6%, 2.43 tricks

**Other leads:**

♦6 3.7%, 2.47 tricks

♣10 3.6%, 2.43 tricks

♣3 3.5%, 2.41 tricks

♠3 3.4%, 2.40 tricks

♠7 3.4%, 2.40 tricks

♣K 2.3%, 2.41 tricks

**COMMENTS:**

I have high confidence that the best pairs lead is a heart. I have low confidence about teams because I've tried the hand with various different possible

assumptions and got quite different results. Detailed knowledge on the methods and reliability of our opponents would help.

On the assumptions given above our side is likely to have a majority of hearts – which are also a passive lead. They therefore have a massive pairs advantage and are comfortable winners at teams too.

As example variants, if we have a North who would have bid 1♠ holding a 4:3:5:1 minimum, then these are the results:

♠A 5.3%, 2.52 tricks \*

♠J 5.2%, 2.57 tricks

♥6 5.0%, 2.66 tricks \*

♦J 4.4%, 2.58 tricks

But of course if North bids that way then South might bid 3NT with five hearts and just one club stop. If so then a ♣ lead is best:

♣J 6.2%, 2.50 tricks \*

♠A 5.5%, 2.46 tricks

♥6 4.5%, 2.53 tricks \*

♦J 4.4%, 2.48 tricks

Everything I tried made diamonds the worst lead at teams and hearts the best at pairs, but that's about all I'm prepared to claim.

Alan Mould asked why the ♠A is so much better than a small spade in all cases. Over 100K hands the simulator only found two deals where the ♠A was necessary to defeat the contract and only 52 (0.052%) where the ♠A is the only card to cost the contract. So surprisingly the choice of spade doesn't matter in the spade suit itself. The 1.9% of deals where a ♠A beats a low ♠ are invariably where we need to attack another suit immediately (nearly always clubs), and there is still time to switch (hopefully partner discourages and we do the right thing). When a low spade gains over the ace it's because we need partner to lead clubs through declarer while we still have the ♠A as an entry. So it's just a matter of which of these cases is more likely – which to some extent depends on how frequently we think we'd do the right thing after leading the ace. □