



# For My Next Trick

by John Matheson

Playing teams, at love all, you pick up as dealer

♠	3
♥	A Q 10 9 4 3
♦	6 5
♣	A 7 6 5

## The Bidding

You open one heart and see one spade from partner. The opposition are silent. What do you rebid?

Some might rebid two hearts, normal with a weak 6-4, but in an aggressive style this is not a completely minimum opener, so, two clubs is to be preferred.

Your partner now forces to game with a fourth-suit bid of two diamonds. What now?

Two hearts. This often shows six hearts, but sometimes a chunky five-carder with no alternative bid.

Partner now sets the suit with three hearts leaving you plenty of room for a slam try below game level. Do you avail yourself of this opportunity?

This is very much down to partnership style. Some play mandatory cuebids i.e. if you do not bid four clubs, you deny a club control. Others play that a cuebid shows extras.

Those who play sound opening bids have no extras, but light openers have a little in reserve.

Partner takes charge with a bid of four spades, Kickback. What is this?

Instead of always using 4NT for Roman Key-card Blackwood, it is becoming common to use the suit above the trump suit at the four-level to ask. This gives more room for investigation, especially when a minor suit is trumps.

You show two aces and the queen of

trumps, inviting partner to bid six hearts.

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

The king of diamonds is led, and you see:

**Dealer South.**  
**Love All.**  
 ♠ A K 10 2  
 ♥ 7 6 5  
 ♦ A J 3  
 ♣ K Q 2

N		
W		E
	S	

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

Contract 6♥.  
 Lead ♦K.

## The Play

As is common nowadays, East signals length on a king lead. He plays the two showing an odd number. The first move, taking a diamond discard on the king of spades, is obvious. One of your main problems now is what to do with the fourth club.

Next, you play a trump. Which is the best line to lose only one trump trick if East plays low?

Playing the ace and leading towards the queen loses two tricks only when two losers are inevitable: West has

♥K-J-x or ♥K-J-x-x. You can even pick up ♥K-J-x-x in East.

If you play the queen on the first round and it loses to the king, you have a choice of plays on the second round: playing the ace loses to an original singleton king; finessing the ten loses to an original doubleton king-jack.

If East plays low, why should you not take the safety play?

Here, you have the fourth club to take care of. If you play the ace of trumps and a club to dummy to lead another trump, any time someone has king-third he has a choice of damaging plays: he can play a third round of trumps to stop a club ruff in dummy, and playing a second round of clubs to kill any squeeze chances. These disadvantages more than offset the advantage of playing the ace on the first round.

What are the advantages of playing to the queen of hearts on the first round?

If the queen holds and West follows, you are home. You draw another round of trumps and just ruff the fourth round of clubs in dummy, losing only a trump.

If the queen loses but the trumps are 2-2, again you make the slam by ruffing the club.

In practice, East plays the jack on the first heart. You try the queen and West takes his king. He returns a trump on which East discards a diamond.

No luck in the trump suit, and you still have to account for the fourth club. Which lines should you consider now?

## The Options

A common manoeuvre in this type of position is to leave the last trump outstanding and try to ruff the fourth club if necessary. This is successful when clubs are 3-3, or when the defender with the last trump has length in clubs. ▶

## For My Next Trick continued

The other possibility is to draw the last trump and play for a squeeze. Basically, you hope that whichever defender has long clubs also controls spades or diamonds.

Which line is the better bet here?

If West has club length, he will be squeezed in the minors, assuming he has the queen of diamonds. So, there is no advantage in trying to ruff the fourth club.

Is there any preparation needed for your squeeze?

Not if West has club length. Just play all of your trumps keeping the jack of diamonds and three clubs in dummy. West will not then be able to keep four clubs. However, if East has club length, your only hope is that he alone controls the spades. You don't necessarily need him to have the queen and the jack: any five or more will do. Draw the last trump, cross to a club and ruff a spade. (The technical term for this is "Isolating the Menace.") Now West will have to have started with ♠Honour-x-x-x to beat the contract. (He would have been very likely to have overcalled one spade with five cards, the king of hearts and the king-queen of diamonds.)

### The Squeeze

The end position will look like this

♠	10			
♥	—			
♦	J			
♣	K 2			
	<table><tr><td>N</td></tr><tr><td>W E</td></tr><tr><td>S</td></tr></table>	N	W E	S
N				
W E				
S				
♠	—			
♥	3			
♦	—			
♣	A 7 6			

You lead your last trump, and, if you have not seen the queen of diamonds, throw the jack. East may now be squeezed. If the spade ten is not a master, try to cash your clubs. This way you will make any time the cards lie favourably. ■



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# Use the Rule of Twenty

**H**ow do you decide whether or not to open the bidding? High card points? Distribution? Honour tricks (if you are old fashioned)? In truth, it's probably a mixture of all these plus a general feel built on experience and judgement.

Is this an opening bid?

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

If you go by high card points, perhaps not but the shape looks good, as does the fact that you have both majors. Most of us would live with the lack of points and open. We all know that points are not the only guide. There is a famous James Bond deal, see below. North-South can make a grand slam in clubs even though West has the most high card points you are ever likely to see in a player's hand:

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

This goes to prove that points are not everything. Shape can be as important. One way of removing the hard work of calculating whether the shape and strength of your hand give you enough

to open is to adopt the 'Rule of 20'  
To work it out, you take your high-card points and then add them to the total length of your two longest suits.

If the answer is 20 or more, you have an opening bid. If you have fewer than 20, you do not.

<b>Hand 1</b> ♠ K J 9 4 3 ♥ Q 9 4 3 ♦ A 4 ♣ 10 5	<b>Hand 2</b> ♠ 7 ♥ A Q 6 4 3 ♦ 9 2 ♣ A 10 5 4 2
--------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------

**Hand 1:** Total high-card points = 10.  
Total length of two longest suits = 9.  
Overall total = 19.

*Not an opening bid.*

**Hand 2:** Total high-card points = 10.  
Total length of two longest suits = 10.  
Overall total = 20.

*An opening bid. Open 1♥.*

The rule can be useful with awkward distributions. Hands with a 4-4-4-1 shape are tricky to bid but also to evaluate. Use the Rule of 20 to decide whether you are worth an opening bid.

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

**Hand 3:** Total high-card points = 11.  
Total length of two longest suits = 8.  
Overall total = 19.

*Not an opening bid.*

**Hand 4:** Total high-card points = 12.  
Total length of two longest suits = 8.  
Overall total = 20.

*An opening bid. Open 1♣.*

If you often come home moaning about poor cards and having had to do some dull defending, the rule of 20 is good news. It will give you more opening bids for your money. It will also spare you hard decisions later in the auction.

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

Suppose you hold hand 5 at game all. Imagine that you do not know the rule of 20, count your points and pass. The opponents bid 1♠-2♠ and it is your turn again. What do you do now? If you pass, you may miss game. If you bid a suit, you may miss a fit in the other one. If you bid and don't have a fit, you may go for a penalty. You can avoid this if you open 1♥. It's safer to bid at the one level than the three level!

Adopting the rule of 20 may make hand evaluation easier and help you decide whether to open the bidding but you can't put judgement away entirely. K-J-10-9-x in a suit is worth more than K-J-x-x-x even though both suits have five cards and four points. Judgement can also point the other way.

Consider hand 6, for instance. Total high card points=11. Total length of two longest suits=9. Overall total=20. So it's an opening bid? I don't think so. The points in my shorts suits are bad news. The fact that if I open 1♥ then I might have to rebid 2♥ also frightens me a bit. My judgement is not to open on this occasion.

Lastly, always remember that if you take up the 'Rule' then it is a guide to help you. It is not a rule of the game that you must slavishly obey. ■



# Cover an Honour to Promote Something

‘Cover an honour’ is one of the oldest bridge maxims. When an opponent leads an honour and the next player covers with a higher honour, this is covering an honour with an honour.

The idea of covering is to set up a lower honour or high-spot card in your hand or partners. It does not matter that you might lose the trick on which you do the covering – indeed you often do lose the trick. You are making an investment for the future.

This example of what happens if you ignore it comes from the final of the 1988 Ladies World Olympiad.

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

The British South opened rather light and ended in 3NT.

West led a diamond, and declarer won in dummy to advance the ten of clubs. The contract found a new lease of life when East did not cover with the jack. The ten forced the king, and a second finesse of declarer’s nine established three club tricks, just enough for the game. If East covers the ten, West makes three club tricks and declarer’s task is hopeless.

When dummy leads an unsupported doubleton honour (eg J-x or Q-x), you usually cover if you have three or fewer cards in the suit.

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

If East does not cover the jack, declarer makes five tricks. If he uses the king to force out the ace, West’s ten will make.

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

With good intermediates, East covers the queen; if he fails to, declarer makes four club tricks instead of three.

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

With nothing to promote, East saves his king to make later. If he covers the queen, declarer makes five club tricks.

Covering is unlikely to help your side when dummy has four or more cards:

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

Declarer leads dummy’s queen to keep the lead there – East should not cover.

The decision whether to cover may be easier when declarer leads from hand.

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

On the jack lead, West covers to set up East’s nine for the fourth round.

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

Here covering can only lose. If West plays low, declarer may overtake and try for a ruffing finesse against East.

Covering when there is something to promote is crucial on our final deal:

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

North-South sacrifice in 5♥ doubled. Two spades, two diamonds and the ace of hearts mean three down for +500. Covering the club jack with the king produces a club trick and a great +800.■



# Barry's Blog

It has become clear to me that not many members understand the way the EBU is structured, so I thought I would take some time to provide that information. I hope I have got my history correct!

During the 1930s a number of national bridge organisations were created to represent bridge players in England and Great Britain. Exasperated by the conflicts between these bodies and by their lack of representation, various counties and groups of counties set up the English Bridge Union in 1936 to look after duplicate and other competition contract bridge in England, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. However it was not until the end of 1946 that the EBU finally achieved complete control of Duplicate Bridge in England. The governing body was its Council, made up of representatives from the counties, the number of votes proportional to the number of members in each county. A different body, the English Bridge Union Limited, was formed in 1940; the Board of this company was also the Executive Committee of the English Bridge Union. Confused? Well, you will be glad to know that the two were merged into one limited company in 2005.

From the beginning the EBU, together with the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish Unions, was part of the British Bridge League which was the national bridge organisation for Great Britain. In 2000 the countries split up and each became their own NBO.

The shares in the company are held by the Counties – not quite the same as the geographic versions – of which there are currently 39. There is no financial benefit for the shareholders but the shareholders are now the body to which the Board of Directors are responsible. The profits of

the business – if any, and there is rarely a large amount – are not distributed to anyone (we are not allowed to distribute profits under the company's Articles of Association) but retained within the business for investment into the development of bridge in England.

The shareholders, currently once a year, elect a Board of Directors, and after that election, vote for a Chairman, Vice Chairman and a Treasurer. All of the Directors have the full – and very onerous – legal responsibility of being a Company Director; for this they get paid the incredible sum of £0.00 pounds per annum. Many of them, the officers in particular, do as much as any full time employee for no salary. Along with the rest of our many volunteers, they receive a reimbursement of their out of pocket expenses.

There are also three "Standing Committees" of the Board, also elected annually by the shareholders. These are the Laws and Ethics, Tournament and Selection Committees. Each of these elected members are also volunteers.

Each County has its own constitution which must be approved by the EBU and elects their Chairman and officers each year. These people are all volunteers, and they too work extremely hard for bridge in their areas.

Finally, there is a paid team of staff at EBU headquarters in Aylesbury, who provide all of the services required of a national membership organisation. We work out of an office that a previous Board wisely purchased when property prices were relatively low, more than 20 years ago. Many of the staff are bridge players who love working in the bridge environment, which is why they do not go elsewhere for more money!


*Barry Capal*

**Mr Bridge**

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From the Scottish Bridge Union News

# Big Deal

by Alasdair Forbes

On the surface, this looks like an easy grand slam, but here is what happened at the four tables in a league match.

Total swing to St Andrew: 2520

At table 3, where there was no opposition bidding, I casually remarked that it looked like a flat board. How wrong can you be?

Sheila MacDonald, playing with Maida Grant, her partner for the European Championship, at table 2 held the East cards – an ideal hand for a Lucas Two opener: five spades and four plus cards in a minor with about 5-9 HCP.

Maida knew that the opponents were in the slam zone and upped the ante to four spades. The Bonnyton North did his best by bidding six hearts, but Maida was there again with six spades. Surprisingly, South opted for a double when he really had the values to bid the grand slam.

When East passed as dealer and South opened 1NT, East could double the two diamond transfer. You have to admire that seven diamond bid by West. It is not easy to bid grand slams in a competitive auction.

If you and your regular partner do not use any form of weak two bids, I hope that this deal reveals their advantages. Do not worry if you suffer the occasional big penalty. Minus 800 looks bad until you find that you have won the match on this one deal.

Finally, when did you last see three grand slams and a small slam all declared by the same team on the same board? Answers on a postcard to the editor will be few and far between. ■

#### Dealer East. NS Vul.

♠ 9			
♥ AKQ10732			
♦ J			
♣ AKQ4			
♠ J873		♠ Q10542	
♥ Void	♠ N	♥ 8	
♦ 76542	♠ W	♦ KQ983	
♣ J972	♠ S	♣ 53	
		♠ AK6	
		♥ J9654	
		♦ A10	
		♣ 1086	

#### TABLE 1 St Andrew BC NS

South	West	North	East
			Pass
1NT	Pass	2♦	Dbl
2♥	3♦	4NT	Pass
5♥	Pass	7♥	End
NS +2210			

#### TABLE 2 Bonnyton BC NS

South	West	North	East
			2♠*
Pass	4♣	6♥	Pass
Pass	6♣	Pass	Pass
Dbl	End		*Lucas 2
NS +800			

#### TABLE 3 St Andrew BC NS

South	West	North	East
			Pass
1♥	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♥	Pass	7♥	End
NS +2210			

#### TABLE 4 Bonnyton BC NS

South	West	North	East
			Pass
1NT	Pass	2♦	Dble
3♥	4♦	4NT	5♦
5♥	Pass	6♥	Pass
Pass	7♦	Dbl	End
NS +1100			



## If the Contract Looks Safe, Look for a Snag

**B**ridge is a hard game but, now and then, a hand comes along that looks simple. In these cases, it is easy to take your eye off the ball. Don't! Danger is often just round the corner. Be vigilant at all times. Take this deal:

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

You arrive in 3NT and win the heart lead. The contract looks easy with two spades, one heart, five diamonds and a club. You also see that you can pick up four diamonds with East by playing to the ace and finessing the ten if need be. Quite right, but did you see the need to play the seven of diamonds towards dummy? If you mistakenly played the two, the suit becomes blocked and you will make only four tricks in the suit!

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

Again, you reach 3NT. This time you receive the lead of the queen of spades.

A quick tally of your tricks shows that, with four tricks in the other suits, you need only five in diamonds for the contract – your target at teams or rubber. It looks so simple to play a low diamond to the ten, a safety play in case the suit breaks 4-1. I am afraid that's wrong. If West plays the five, you should cover with the six in case the suit splits 5-0, while if West follows with any other card you should duck altogether. How clever it would be for West to play the jack of diamonds and how much cleverer it would be for you to duck!

Sometimes built-in instinct takes over when a nice dummy appears, though this can at times lead you astray....

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

You arrive in 4♠ and receive the lead of the two of clubs. If you are playing on autopilot, you might be tempted to play low from dummy. That would be a fatal mistake. East takes the king and returns a club. West ruffs, plays the ace of diamonds and then a low diamond to his partner's king. Another club ruff puts the contract two down! If declarer stops to count his tricks, however, he will work out that he doesn't need two club tricks. Six spades, two hearts, a diamond ruff and a club come to ten.

Just take the ace of clubs, draw trumps and throw a club on a good heart. You lose just one club and two diamonds – your last diamond you ruff in dummy. A 6-1 club break was unfortunate but should not have mattered.

Sometimes it is hard to think as clearly as one should when an opponent has doubled the contract or you are in a slam. The excitement of the moment takes over and the adrenalin rush can get in the way....

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

After a well-judged auction, you arrive in a contract of 7♠ and receive the lead of the jack of diamonds. It is easy to be complacent in this sort of situation and rather take things for granted. Here, for example, it would be all too easy to assume that you had more than enough tricks. Don't! You have to be aware that trumps might break badly. If West has all four missing trumps, the contract is doomed. Luckily, you can cater for them all with East. What you must not do is play a top spade from your hand first! Instead, play low to the queen, whereupon you find out about the bad break. You now have nothing to worry about because, with plenty of entries to dummy, you can take repeated finesses against the jack and the ten to ensure a happy outcome. ■



# Defence to Weak Twos

**Q** I wonder if you could provide a quick resumé of a defence to weak two bids. My RHO opened 2♥, and I had 12 points including ace, queen and two other hearts. I passed, but my partner and I should have been in a contract; in fact, all we did was get them down two, vulnerable. Audrey Harrison, Leeds

Dealer South. Game All.

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

West	North	East	South
			2♥
End			

**A** In my opinion (along with the vast majority of tournament and international players), the best defence to weak twos is the take-out double, just as over a one-level opening.

Perhaps the deal was like the above. So, as West, with a weak no-trump hand-type and length in the suit opened, you would have been quite right to pass.

However, with a shortage in the suit opened, just as after a one-bid, partner can re-open with a double on fewer than

opening values. With a singleton heart, it would be fine for him to double with as few as 10 points. His double would give you something of a problem. You might consider passing for penalties, or else responding 2NT or 3NT, or jumping in spades. The problem with a bid in no-trumps or spades is deciding how high to bid. Although, with 12 HCP facing what may be only a 10-count, bidding 3NT might get you too high, because you would have to bid 2NT with 8 or 9 points, it seems a bit of an underbid when you have 12 (and some people play a 2NT response as artificial in any case). When considering a spade bid, in some ways you are worth bidding game, but your suit is so weak that you would be in trouble if partner had only a three-card suit. Perhaps passing is the most practical way of getting a plus score.



**Q** Playing duplicate bridge, I received the following cards as South:

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

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

**Surprise, surprise, my partner led a club. He looked somewhat perplexed**

when dummy put down the king and queen of clubs (and two others) and West won with her (singleton) ace. When my partner held neither the ace, nor the king nor the queen of spades, declarer made eleven tricks. At most other tables, West made only seven tricks, presumably because North did not lead a club.

I doubled East's 3♥ bid on the basis that I had the ace-king of trumps as well as the ace of diamonds, and was expecting to make at least two spade tricks/ruffs. Knowing that my partner was bound to lead a club, was I wrong to bid clubs twice and/or to double 3♥? K R Mills, Bournemouth

**A** I think your 2♣ rebid was extremely misguided and got its just desserts! Assuming you were playing Acol, your partner already knew you had clubs when you opened in the suit and you hardly have anything to spare in the club department. Even playing five-card majors, partner would assume a six-card suit for the 2♣ rebid. You were lucky he did not raise you!

With regard to your final double, I suppose it was a worthwhile risk at pairs, but it would seem to me that East voluntarily raised to 3♥. So, it is quite likely that your opponents are a level higher than anyone else in any event.

As to your partner's opening lead, I do not know his whole hand but there is one thing to bear in mind when making an opening lead after you have made a penalty double. The doubler would not have been counting on many tricks in his long suit and is thus much more likely to have his high cards elsewhere. ▶

## Sally Brock answers your questions continued

**Q** On the hand below, West opened 3♣. North and East passed. Playing standard Acol, please suggest a suitable bidding sequence. 4♠ made, but how do you get there?

♠	A 9 5 4									
♥	2									
♦	10 9 6 5 4									
♣	Q 9 4									
<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>			N		W		E		S	
	N									
W		E								
	S									
♠	Q J 10 7									
♥	A J 10 8 3									
♦	A Q									
♣	K 10									

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
3♣	Pass	Pass	?

Mike Duncan, Thornage, Norfolk

**A** When West's 3♣ opening goes round to South he has a tricky choice of bid, but a take-out double would seem to be the normal action.

Although historically people used to play penalty doubles of opening pre-empts, these days nearly everyone plays take-out doubles, just like at the one level. In my view, North should respond 3♠. Partner is much more likely to hold the majors than diamonds – if game is on (and North has enough to hope that that might be the case), it is easier to make ten tricks in spades than eleven in diamonds.

South then has a close decision between passing and raising to game, though he may well take a conservative view because he does not like his king doubleton in clubs.

In truth, on the bidding it does not seem to me that game is such a wonderful contract anyway.



**Q** We are recent converts to your excellent publication and play a regular social four. My partner on the night (who

is the best of all of us) and I came across the following.

♠	A Q 7 5		♠	K J 8 4 2									
♥	A Q 8 6		♥	K J 7 5									
♦	A Q 6 5	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♦	10 7 3
	N												
W		E											
	S												
♣	A		♣	K									

Sitting West I opened 2♣ and the sequence was as follows.

West	East
2♣	2♣
3♦	3♥
4♣ <sup>1</sup>	4♦ <sup>2</sup>
4NT <sup>3</sup>	5♣ <sup>4</sup>
7♠	

<sup>1</sup>Gerber

<sup>2</sup>none – obviously

<sup>3</sup>for kings

<sup>4</sup>three kings

**Accept, if you will, that we understood each other perfectly. In the end, I had to decide whether partner held the king of clubs or the king of diamonds and, as a gambler, I opted for the latter and a maximum.**

In the event, both the king of diamonds and the jack of diamonds were onside but partner had a rare lapse and we were one off. (I said I would not mention it but I lied).

**How could we have identified the problem? We play a fairly standard Acol even if it does not look like it!**

John Roberts, Northampton

**A** There is horrible duplication on this hand and it is quite possible that many pairs would get too high, but I have some comments to make on your auction.

Why did West rebid 3♦ rather than make an immediate raise of partner's spades? Having rebid the rather curious 3♦, why not simply raise partner's 3♥ to 4♥ (or bid 3♠). Once West has opened 2♣, he has nothing extra to say. In many ways, he is sub-minimum both in terms of points and distribution (4-4-4-1 hands play notoriously badly). Why would he want to rush into Gerber when he has no idea how strong his partner is,

especially when he holds all the aces? If West limits his hand by simply raising partner, East will have a much better idea of where the auction should end.

It is generally not a good idea to bid speculative grand slams because you risk losing what would have been a hefty slam bonus in any event. Unless one of you had some better diamond spot cards than you have given me here, it is unclear how your partner should have made the contract, even with both diamond honours onside.



**Q** I should be grateful if you could give me your valuable expert opinion for an appropriate opening bid on the following hand. To complicate matters, my partner and I play Precision Club; nevertheless, I would be grateful for guidance on an opening using a more conventional system.

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

The deal occurred during a duplicate bridge session. I have deliberately refrained from quoting the other hands, and the final contracts, so that this cannot influence your opinion in any way!

Michael Derry, Grantham, Lincs.

**A** These strong pre-emptive hands are very difficult and everyone develops their own style. Some people like to play that opening bids of 4♣ and 4♦ show strong pre-empts in hearts and spades respectively, but even this would not come close to showing a solid nine-card suit. Personally, I would open 4♠ and hope for the best. I would be prepared to bid 5♠ on my own if the opponents came into the auction. However, I know players who like to pass with this hand type, hoping to judge how high to bid later. ▶

Sally Brock is a multiple women's world bridge champion and is editor of the magazine Bridge Plus.

**Q** Partner deals and opens 1♥; right hand opponent overcalls 1♠. What should I bid on a hand like the following?

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

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	?	

Without the intervention I would have bid 1NT, showing a hand worth a response but with too few points to bid a new suit at the 2-level. Should I still bid 1NT or should I pass?

Audrey Budding, Whitchurch, Cardiff

**A** Once the opponents have bid a suit, partner will expect you to have a stopper in their suit when you bid no-trumps (though perhaps half a stopper is acceptable if you are in fourth seat). So, just as when you are overcalling 1NT you need a stopper in the suit opened, when you are responding 1NT you need a stopper in the suit overcalled.

Never mind, there is a tool that was invented to help you: ‘negative’ or ‘Sputnik’ doubles are perfect for this hand!

In the old days when your opponent overcalled, a double by the next hand was for penalties. However, that is quite an old-fashioned treatment these days. In truth, such penalties are rare (and in any case, with a hand that wishes to make a penalty double, you can always pass and hope that partner reopens with a double, which you can pass).

The widespread use of a take-out double in this position (the English

Bridge Union teaches it right from the start, for example) is for it to show the values to respond but length in the other two suits. So, on a hand like this, double would be perfect.

♣♦♥♠

**Q** Can you please explain how to bid the hands below; playing club duplicate pairs? Thank you.

Keith Boothby, Buxton

Dealer: North.

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

**A** At teams, this hand would not be a problem because both 3NT and 4♠ are excellent games. However, neither is likely to make an overtrick so, at pairs, you need to bid the major-suit game to score well and I can see how easy it might be to land in 3NT.

North opens 1♦ and South responds 1♠. What should North bid? I am generally a fan of bidding no-trumps with balanced hands but here, with two little clubs, it really does not make much sense. North should rebid 2♥. This manufactured ‘reverse’ bid shows extra strength and would usually be a four-card suit, but it is fairly safe because if partner raises hearts then he must have five spades.

Over 2♥, the spotlight moves to South. With 11 points facing a reverse bid, he must make sure that the partnership reaches game.

He does not know which game so he does best to mark time with fourth-suit forcing and bid 3♣. North now shows his spade support and the major-suit game is reached.

I do not know how long you have been playing bridge but the sequence suggested above is quite difficult. I am sure that many club players would not manage it.

♣♦♥♠

**Q** Most of us are familiar with the majority of responses to an opening bid. Our card shows that 1NT is 6-9 points with no 4-card major, 2NT is 10-12 and 3NT is 13+. A jump raise shows 10-12 with 4 cards of the major bid by opener.

Now to the crunch – as responder to a 1♠ bid I hold a 3-4-3-3 hand (four hearts and three of every other suit) with exactly 13 high card points. What do I bid, how do I show 13 points with three spades, without lying to my partner?

This was at the club and I have had sleepless nights since.


John H. Pavey, Toronto

**A** I am not quite clear whether your problem was your 4-3-3-3 distribution or the fact that your four-card suit was hearts.

In general, it is good practice to play that a jump to 3NT shows 4-3-3-3 distribution, rather than any balanced distribution. That way partner has a better idea of whether or not to move forwards when he is strong. With a 4-4-3-2 distribution, it is easy enough to start by bidding your lower four-card suit before rebidding 3NT.

However, you are right that there is a particular problem when you have hearts because a 2♥ response to 1♠ shows a five-card suit. The traditional way to deal with this hand is to lie a little and respond 2♣. It usually will not matter that you have only a three-card suit.

If you play five-card majors though, it is surely acceptable to respond in your four-card heart suit because, if partner raises, you can always go back to spades. ■

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Welcome Desk open  
Afternoon Tea

1745 to 1830  
Welcome drinks  
reception

1830 to 2000  
DINNER

2015 **BRIDGE**  
**SESSION 1**  
DUPLICATE PAIRS

**SATURDAY**

0800 to 0930  
BREAKFAST

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

1230 to 1330  
COLD BUFFET  
LUNCH

1400 to 1645  
**BRIDGE**  
**SESSION 2**  
TEAMS of FOUR

1815 to 2000  
DINNER

2015 **BRIDGE**  
**SESSION 3**  
DUPLICATE PAIRS

**SUNDAY**

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BREAKFAST

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

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

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**Mr Bridge**, Ryden Grange, Knaphill, Surrey GU21 2TH

☎ 01483 489961 Fax 01483 797302

e-mail: [leanora@mrbridge.co.uk](mailto:leanora@mrbridge.co.uk)

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## PROGRAMME

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

### FRIDAY

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

**1745 to 1830**  
Welcome drinks  
reception

**1830 to 2000**  
DINNER

**2015 BRIDGE  
SESSION 1**  
DUPLICATE PAIRS

### SATURDAY

**0800 to 0930**  
BREAKFAST

**1000 to 1230**  
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(tea & coffee at 1100)

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LUNCH

**1400 to 1645**  
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TEAMS of FOUR

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DINNER

**2015 BRIDGE  
SESSION 3**  
DUPLICATE PAIRS

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# Mr Magee and Me . . .

## A Weekend by the Sea

### by Linda Saunders

**A** Just after Christmas I was delighted to accept an invitation to spend a weekend by the sea with Mr Magee. News had leaked out about my passionate affair and Mr Bridge thought it was time we met. I was a little apprehensive setting off alone because for the past ten years I have led a sheltered life as a widow; but on arrival I was quickly put at ease. Two members of the Mr Bridge team were there ready to hand out the programme for the weekend, a bidding quiz, and a name badge for each new arrival. After settling into my comfortable room overlooking the sea, I went down to the welcoming reception in the lounge. There were about forty people from various parts of the country all eagerly talking about their common interest of bridge. I was told this was to be a small gathering compared with other events but that suited me; it would be cosy. I wondered if Mr Magee had arrived and if so I might have the chance to meet him face to face. He had and I did. With a glass of white wine in my hand and Mr Magee's arm around my shoulder my initial nervousness faded. Of course, his attentions were shared with all those attending ... I would not

want to give the wrong impression!

We all moved into the dining room where an excellent dinner was served. The gleaming white table linen, sparkling glasses and silver added to my pleasure. This was better than my usual solitary meal on a tray.



There were several people who had come alone and all were skillfully and sensitively paired up for the evening session of bridge. Quite quickly, Mr Magee and me ... and everyone else in the room were on first name terms.

My partner and I were relative newcomers to the game and we were grateful for the patience and encouragement shown to us by the

more experienced players. Once or twice Mr Magee came over to our table at our request to advise us on the finer points of bidding. WOW! The man was out of the machine reminding me that a strong two opening promised eight quick tricks. His help was both kindly and constructive.

ended at 11.00 p.m. and I retired happily for the night.

The following morning after breakfast I attended a seminar on the subject of 'Sacrifice'. Mr Magee operated with his PC linked to a large screen as he explained the topic clearly with examples. He dealt with questions as they arose. After a break for coffee, most people played set hands in order to put the theory into practice. I left for a stroll along the promenade as the subject was just a little advanced for me. I had, after all, only been playing bridge for just over a year.

Since buying the Acol Bidding Program for my PC last summer I have concentrated on improving my game at home. The beauty of the software is that one CAN learn at home alone IF one has enough self-discipline and motivation. Some people I know who have bought the program seem unable to set aside a regular time for Mr Magee. Fitting him into your day would be essential in order to make significant progress.

But learning in this way is no substitute for real play. The truth is that one complements the other ... systematic practice at home at the computer will undoubtedly improve levels of skill ▶

# Mr Magee and Me . . . A Weekend by the Sea continued

and knowledge, hands can be replayed and examined ad infinitum. But the real test is playing with a real-life partner in a session at the bridge table with other players. Attending lessons is another option but I need the constant repetition provided by the Acol Bidding Programme. I lack the discipline to look back at the notes I have made while attending lessons. It seems to me that the skills required must become automatic, rather like driving a car. Faced with a bid from partner, you need to be able to assess all the information being imparted: strength and shape of partner's hand, whether or not it is an invitational bid or a cue bid or a convention ... there is little time to think or ponder at the bridge table. And one could play for many years, repeating the same mistakes over and over again. The computer program reinforces good practice but like everything else, you have to do your part.

One of the questions I ask locally is: "How long have you been playing bridge?" The answers vary but mostly the response is: "twenty or more years or so". Some people tell me they have been playing for more than fifty years. Even Mr Magee, himself, has been playing for twenty-three years. Realistically, I have rather a lot of ground to cover if I have any chance of playing well. Combining the Magee computer programs with playing locally, as well as my visits to Coaching Corner in

Bridge Club Live should help me to learn more quickly. Everyone agrees that you never stop learning bridge and that's why it is an excellent game: the challenges never end.

After lunch on Saturday there was a Teams of Four event. I set off for a wander around Worthing. It was a crisp, sunny day and I enjoyed the walk ... and the break from bridge. There is always a full programme of bridge available but participation is optional throughout. During the weekend people moved easily between lounge, dining-room, bridge seminars and games, or their own personal pursuits. The whole atmosphere was relaxed and friendly.

By the evening, I was refreshed and ready to play in another bridge session. I stayed with the same partner although there is never any need to stick together. Changing partners is possible but we were quite happy and sufficiently challenged!

The following morning there was another seminar, this time on two-suited overcalls. What a powerful weapon that is! The session was followed by set hands played under the caring eyes of the Mr Bridge Team. Whenever there was a problem with our bidding, we were joined by one of the team who helped to set us straight. This was a most valuable time for me, reinforcing the teaching we had just received and I noticed the

experienced players at our table benefited also.

Prizes were awarded to those with the highest scores in the various events. I noticed that one couple did exceptionally well. I spoke to them over lunch and they confessed that despite the fact they had completed two years of classes, they attended everything they could that Mr Magee was hosting. They swore by his methods and as far as they were concerned ... Mr Magee was the bee's knees. Whatever he advised, they did. And if ever they had a difference of opinion over bidding, they would quickly resolve the matter by referring to Mr Magee's books or software. Clearly, I am not his only fan!

After lunch there was another bridge session but I decided to leave as I had a two hour journey ahead. I made my farewells, knowing this would be the first of many similar holiday breaks for me. My weekend by the sea with Mr Magee was a great success. I set off for home knowing that I would have no hesitation in booking a future Mr Bridge break.

## Postscript

And as for my passionate affair, well of course Mr Magee is one of many splendid bridge teachers. I can confirm that I am, indeed, old enough to be his mother. No matter: in real life, he has unwittingly brought about a real romance for me with another bridge player who (as a result of my persuasion) has become as committed as I am with regard to daily practice with Mr Magee's computer programs. Maybe I can persuade him to accompany me on my next bridge weekend! ■

## Better Hand Evaluation Bernard Magee

### Introduction

*Better Hand Evaluation* is aimed at helping readers to add greater accuracy to their bidding. It deals with auctions in which you and your partner, against silent opponents, can fully describe your hands to each other and, by evaluating them accurately, find the best final contract. The emphasis of all good, accurate bidding is on hand evaluation.

There are two general types of auction: a) A fit is found and b) No fit is found.

When you do not have a fit, you are aiming to describe the strength of your hand as soon as possible, most often using no-trump bids. This book begins by discussing balanced hand bidding in Acol, as it is very important that both members of a partnership have an accurate knowledge of how to show hands of different strengths.

When a fit is found, there is much re-evaluation of the hand to be done; point count, though still important, needs to be evaluated along with distribution. The best way of reaching an accurate assessment is to use the Losing Trick Count; this is an important method of hand evaluation and takes up a number of chapters.

Finally, we move on to different forms of evaluation including game tries and splinter bids. You can never know enough methods of hand evaluation; the more you learn, the better you get at judging your hand.

Although the Losing Trick Count is more easily used in tandem with your partner, a large proportion of the ideas in this book can be used by an individual. For example, evaluating your hand to be worth an extra point is going to help anyone you partner – as long as you get it right!

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