



# A Walk in Summer

**T**his little piece of England, where the birds are singing, the sun shining and the air seriously intoxicating – it is all too easy to fall under its magic spell and dream on, contentedly...

‘I tell you what,’ I said to Cindy, my beautiful golden retriever as she snuggled up beside me, ‘let’s go down to the river and walk along that twisting path and watch wild life.’ Much tail wagging assured me that she thoroughly approved, although to be completely honest, I think that, if I had suggested climbing Mont Blanc she would have been equally enthusiastic! Walkies is the thing; where is comparatively low on the agenda.

It was a glorious day in early June. Somehow it reminded me of Nat King Cole and his ‘Lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer’ – but we will skip the pretzels and beer. On our way across the fields to the river, I notice several different species of butterfly but the one that always intrigues me is the Peacock butterfly. Those spots (the Peacock’s eye) located on the upper part of its four wings it uses to deter would-be predators. Nature has a wonderful way of protecting such frail and delicate looking creatures. Well, if you were a bird, say, and you saw four large eyes staring at you, would you hang around to find out what it was? If it were me, I think I would be up, up and away!

This particular walk is always full of interest as there is so much wild life activity. Just for a moment, I find myself captivated by the brilliant colours of a kingfisher as it swoops

down to snatch its prey. Then I look further along to the opposite side of the bank, where I can see a mallard and her offspring. Then I notice a familiar figure coming towards us. It is Paul, a large and rather portly chap from the bridge club, exercising his two Springer spaniels. The entourage is unmistakable. Cindy and the spaniels welcome each other in a very friendly way, just as though someone had arranged the meeting especially for them.

‘I’m so glad I’ve bumped into you,’ says Paul after hurried greetings. It is obvious he has something on his mind so I wait expectantly. ‘Perhaps you can tell me what I did wrong on this deal:’

‘We seem to have had quite a good sequence that took us to 6♥, but how should I have played it? West leads the ace of clubs and switches to the jack of spades.’

I shall leave you thinking about that for the moment and we will come back to it later.

Paul and his spaniels, and Cindy and I, continued on our different routes. I reverted quickly to absorbing the local scene, which has so much to offer a country lover. The river wends its way slowly and nonchalantly as though it has not a care in the world. A romantic would surely go into raptures about such a setting that both enchants the eye and must provide endless pleasure and excitement for animal and bird life.

I notice an otter taking to the water as we approach, maybe seeking refuge from Cindy, and then we disturb two rather unusual birds. I think they are great crested grebes and make a mental note to look them up when I get home. Then there is the magnificent sight of a family of mute swans swimming along in convoy. Mum in front (or is it dad?) closely followed by six cygnets and the other parent bringing up the rear. I believe swans mate for life and share their parental duties equally with such dedicated diligence and sincerity that I find myself wondering where the human race went wrong!

Back to Paul’s hand – you may recall that South is in 6♥. West cashes a top club and switches to the jack of spades.

Paul assessed his chances like this. ‘I have eleven tricks on top, five hearts, three diamonds, two spades and one ▶

**Dealer South. Game All.**

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

N		E
W	S	

♠ K 7 6  
♥ A K Q 10 8  
♦ A K Q 2  
♣ Q

North	South
	2♣
2♦	2♥
3♥	4♦
4♣	4NT
5♦	6♥
End	

spade ruff in dummy. If the trumps are 2-2, there is no problem; I can ruff my last diamond in dummy if necessary. If the trumps are 3-1 or 4-0, I shall need the diamonds to be 3-3.' This was the full deal:

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

That was a fair analysis – as far as it went – but Paul had overlooked the possible advantage of taking three ruffs in his own hand (Dummy Reversal). With careful timing and close attention to the question of entries (for a Dummy Reversal to succeed you require four entries to dummy; three to ruff clubs and one more to draw the last trump) it is possible to combine all the chances.

The ace of spades wins trick two and he ruffs a club high. He overtakes the eight of hearts with dummy's nine and ruffs a second club high. Now he plays the ten of hearts to dummy's jack, East discarding a club. This development rules out taking two ruffs in dummy, so he ruffs a third club with his last trump in hand. The king of spades and a spade ruff place the lead in dummy once more. This enables him to draw the last trump while he discards the two of diamonds from his own hand. The slam is home.

'A strange hand' I tell Cindy. 'One has to plan quite carefully from the second trick otherwise the Dummy Reversal element is aborted – and in this particular case it is very much needed.'

Cindy looks up at me with those big brown beautiful eyes, which seem to have some sort of message. Perhaps it is, 'I hope you explained all that to Paul.' ■



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# Third Hand Plays High

Partner leads the two of spades and dummy plays low. Which card do you play as East below?

1

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

West	North	East	South
			1♥
Pass	3♥	Pass	4♥
End			

You know that partner will not have underled an ace in a trump contract, so is there any point in putting up the king, just to have it topped by declarer's ace? Let us think about partner's lead. Holding only small cards in the suit, partner would have led a middle or high card. Therefore, we know that the two must be from an honour. If it is the jack, it does not matter whether we play the nine or the king, since the nine would lose to the queen giving declarer two tricks in the suit. However, if partner has led from the queen, it is imperative to put up the king in order to establish partner's queen.

What does the rule of "third hand high" tell you? It tells you that, if partner leads a low card, and the next hand also plays low, the player in third seat should play their highest card in the suit (but lowest from equal cards). The objective is to win the trick or drive out a top card from declarer and, you hope, establish a winner for partner.

2

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

South plays in 4♥ on the same auction as 1. This time partner leads the seven of spades and declarer plays low from dummy. What card do you play now?

Again, you must think what the lead may be from. It looks most likely to be second highest from 9-7-x-x or be from J-9-7. In either case, you should play the ten. If partner has led from low cards, you will hold declarer to two tricks by doing so. If instead he has led from the jack, playing the ten will prevent declarer from having a second trick in the suit.

So what happened to third hand high? Actually, you did play high – but you took a finesse with the ten – saving your king to cover the queen later.

3

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

West	North	East	South
Pass	3NT	End	1NT (12-14)

Your partner leads the seven of spades against three no-trumps. Which card do you play as East?

You see the same spade suit as last time, but there are two important differences. Can you see what they are?

Firstly, when you are defending against a no-trump contract, partner may well have led from an ace whereas this is unlikely in a trump contract. Secondly, the lead is slightly different. The seven will tell you that if partner has led fourth highest, declarer will have one higher card in the suit. If it is anything but the ace, there is no cost to playing the king. Indeed, when declarer holds the jack doubleton, as here, it is essential to play the king.

Just consider the position where declarer has the ace – is he really going to play low from dummy to trick one? No, of course he is going to try putting up the queen. Therefore it appears correct to put up the king... but is it?

Suppose partner has led second highest from four small cards? This would give declarer the ace-jack and, if declarer has only A-J-8 rather than A-J-9, it may be important to play the ten, to hold declarer to two tricks in the suit. Now on the expected play of the diamond finesse, you can win and continue with the king of spades. So how do we know what to do?

If 3NT is to go down on this second highest lead, partner will need to have four diamonds to the ten at least. Do not play for partner to have led from his second best suit. When partner has led a card that could be fourth highest, you should normally play him for it and play high to the first trick. We all want to lead our longest and strongest suit if we possibly can, even partner!



# Make the Most Economical Bid

If you and your partner are bidding towards a contract, it may make sense to make a cheap bid to allow room for you both to describe your hands. Suppose you hold:

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

You open 1♠, intending to rebid 2♥, but your partner responds 3NT. What do you do now? You will just wriggle for a few moments, before passing. Partner will have about a flat 13-count, but he might have four hearts (making 4♥ a better spot), or even three spades (probably making 4♠ better).

“The most economical bid” might not equate to the lowest possible bid. It means you make the lowest bid that tells partner something new about your hand and allows for how the auction is likely to develop. Here are some examples. With hands A and B you are first to speak. What do you open?

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

With hand A, the lowest rational bid is 1♦. There is nothing wrong with this systemically and, because you can rebid 2♦, the development of the auction poses no threats. Is 1♦ also the most economical bid in the sense of giving information to partner? No, 1NT does the job better. Partner will have a much clearer idea of your strength and balanced shape if you open 1NT.

1NT, although not the lowest bid, is the most economical as it describes several features of your hand at once.

With hand B, you could in theory open any of 1♦, 1♥ and 1♠. The theme of keeping the bidding low suggests that you open 1♦, leaving maximum space at the one level. Indeed, 1♦ tells partner as much as 1♥ or 1♠. How though is the auction going to develop?

You will be happy if partner responds 1♥ or 1♠. Now suppose he responds 2♣. What is your rebid? Oops. You can scarcely rebid your four-card diamond suit. Nor can you reverse into 2♥ or 2♠ or bid 2NT as these rebids all show a stronger hand than you have. No, you should have opened 1♥ in the first place with 2♦ available as a rebid if required. So on this deal, 1♥ is the most economical opening, as it enables you to develop the auction sensibly.

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

With Hand C partner has opened 1♦, and with Hand D partner has opened 1♠. What do you respond?

Hand C is a good example of the most economical bid also being the lowest available bid. Some players might bypass the poor heart suit and respond 1♠, claiming that Q-x-x-x does not represent a biddable suit. Now suppose partner has something like this:

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

After hearing your 1♠ response, he will rebid 1NT and there the bidding will rest, with the heart fit lost forever. No, 1♥ is the most sensible bid. It tells partner as much as any other available bid, and causes no future problems – and for all those reasons is easily the most “economical” response.

Hand D is trickier. You cannot bid 4♠ with only three spades, and 2♥ would be wrong on a four-card suit. With no minor, is the “most economical bid” 3NT, describing your hand in one fell swoop? Aha! If you did that, you are giving partner the problem you faced at the start of this article!

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

Partner can only squirm after 3NT.

You should have considered bidding 2♣. What can go wrong? If partner rebids spades, you can go to 4♠. If he rebids in hearts, you can choose between 4♠ and 4♥. If he rebids in a minor, you can jump to 4♠. If instead he rebids in no-trumps, you can bid 3♠ to let him choose between 3NT and 4♠. The space-saving 2♣ bid allows much more room for exploration.

By the way, for the reasons given above, many experts no longer use a 3NT response to show a flat 13-15. For that matter, many players no longer use a 2NT response to show a flat 11-12 for the same reason. With a balanced hand and 11 or more points, you save space if you bid a suit in the first round rather than just bashing 2NT or 3NT.

Remember, the most economical bid is not always the lowest bid. It is the lowest bid that is sound and does not tangle the subsequent auction. ■

# BERYL HUTCHINSON

*One of my Weekend Event Helpers*

British Red Cross stalwart, Beryl Hutchinson, from Grantham, has been appointed vice-chair of the charity's board of trustees.

Mrs Hutchinson has worked and volunteered for the Red Cross for more than 40 years since she joined the organisation as a volunteer nursing and training officer.



Taking on this prestigious role at the Red Cross means that I can help make a difference to the lives of vulnerable people both in the UK and overseas".

Mrs Hutchinson, the former Grantham Hospital assistant general manager of patient services, spent the eight years (1991 until 1999) as director of the Lincolnshire branch of the Red Cross.

In her new role, she will work with chairman James Cochrane and seventeen trustees.

Mrs Hutchinson said: "I am both humbled and thrilled after having been elected vice-chair for this wonderful organisation.

In 1999, she was awarded an MBE for her service to the Red Cross.

To learn more about the Red Cross and its work in the UK and overseas or to volunteer, visit their website: [www.red-cross.org.uk](http://www.red-cross.org.uk) ■

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# Support Partner

One key to good bidding is to understand when you have found a fit and to tell partner the good news as soon as possible.

The more trumps you have the better – eight or more is ideal – they generate tricks in their own right and stop the opponents from cashing winners. Look at the following two hands and think how you would respond to an opening bid of 1♥ from partner:

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

With no immediate fit, you respond 1♠ with hand A even though it is quite weak. Many would do the same with hand B as well and that is wrong. Why is that? Whatever partner's hand might be, he will not have more spades than hearts – else he would have opened 1♠. You therefore know you cannot have a better fit in any other suit and so should raise to 2♥ with this minimum hand. 2♥ shows a hand of about 6-9 points or a nine-loser hand for those familiar with that concept. Make your hand slightly stronger (with the club king instead of the eight) and you would bid 3♥ – showing about 10-11 points or an eight-loser hand.

Because in Acoll an opening bid of one only promises a four-card suit, it is not usual to support partner immediately with less than four cards in the suit (although there are exceptions).

Sometimes you know that partner must have at least a five-card suit and then you can raise with three-card support. Look at the following two hands and see what conclusions you come to and what you should bid next:

Hand C	Hand D
♠ A K 8 7	♠ A K 8 7
♥ K 8 7	♥ K 8 7
♦ K 6 4 2	♦ 7 3
♣ 7 3	♣ K 6 4 2

You	Partner	You	Partner
	1♥		1♥
1♠	2♥	1♠	2♦
?		?	

With hand C, you should bid 4♥: by repeating his suit, partner must have at least five hearts, often six. Even facing a minimum opener, you know you have game values. Now you know that your side has at least eight hearts, you bid 4♥.

It might be harder to see with hand D, but again you bid 4♥ as partner must have at least five hearts. With a flat hand, say 2-4-4-3, he would have opened 1NT or rebid no-trumps; with 1-4-4-4 and a singleton spade, he would surely have rebid 2♣, not 2♦. So, with an eight-card fit and game values you bid 4♥.

Another source of confusion is how to continue after partner has overcalled. So what would you do if partner had overcalled an opening 1♥ bid with 1♠ and with third hand passing you hold:

Hand E
♠ A 7 6
♥ 6 5
♦ K 10 7 6 5
♣ Q 5 4

I hope you do not bid 2♦; it is wrong because partner must have at least a five-card suit for his overcall. Knowing you have an eight-card fit or better, it is right to bid 2♠. Moreover, a change of suit after an overcall is not forcing, as it would be after an opening bid.

If you bid 2♦, partner could easily pass and then you would lose the spade fit.

On a more advanced level, if you have support for partner in the suit in which he has overcalled but in a relatively weak hand, somewhere in the 6-10 bracket say, you should raise. In broad terms, you should raise to the two level with three-card support, to the three level with four-card support and to the four level with five-card support. In other words, you bid to make the same number of tricks as your side has trumps, assuming the overcaller has five.

Let us see this in action:

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

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

By the time the bidding is back to North, it is at the four-level. His side can make 4♥, but not 5♥ and 4♠ is only one down. The best North can do is double but that is far from obvious.

I always believe in bidding what you think partner wants to hear if possible, and what partner wants to hear most of all is that you can support his suit. There are a million cases that we could have considered and we have looked at just a few. These are enough to give food for thought, I hope. ■



# Bridge in the 25th Century

by Michael Scarrott

**T**he Martians are fielding a particularly strong pair this year', said Milo Gort, President of the Intergalactic Bridge Federation.

## Galaxy Cup

The event in question was the prestigious Galaxy Cup taking place on Planet Earth. The champion team from each of the eight member planets would compete over four days with the grand final watched by over 20 billion viewers. The ninth planet, Mercury, had received a 'forever' ban from the competition several decades ago when their star player Splinter revoked, causing his highly-strung partner to vaporise him on the spot!

Orca Blanca, the three-foot tall representative from Uranus spoke up: 'I just hope the Martians don't come up against Earth in the final. There is still bad blood over that book written centuries ago by that chap Wells. He portrayed the Martians as long-tentacled monsters, intent on invasion. You should also know about that 20th century composer, Holst. He wrote some music about the planets and even he referred to Mars as the *Bringer of War*.'

Milo glanced across the table at the Martian representative. 'Quite amazing', he thought. 'The Martians look just like Earth people, except for the webbed hands and feet. They have beautiful manners and are always polite and courteous to everyone at the card table. The Earth players could well learn a thing or two from them.'

'It's taken nearly four hundred years', croaked Janus Scort from Neptune. 'Bridge is the National Sport for all eight member planets. The best players

are superstars with dedicated followers applauding every trick they make. Back in the 21st Century Earth's National Sport was something called soxer. Our archives portray this as a game where participants chased a small ball about in a most unruly manner.'

David Hill, the suave, blue-eyed Earth representative joined in: 'yes, we called it *soccer*. Supporters from each team chanted battle songs during the play and mass hysteria and mayhem usually followed each game. Many players achieved more fame than World leaders and archives show that one gained the affectionate name 'golden balls'. Mind you, bridge can sometimes cause problems like the time when the pair from Jupiter decided to sort out a bidding dispute by arm wrestling at the table. With four arms each, it created quite a spectacle. The Jupiterians can play the cards and have a drink all at the same time!'

## The Draw

The draw for the first-round matches soon took place and received a priority universal news flash. Invited guests could watch the play on giant screens, while satellites beamed the live action back to each planet. A panel of past Galactic champions analysed each card as they saw it played.

Matches would be over thirty-six boards in each of the preliminary rounds with semi-finalists competing over forty-eight boards for a place in the final. A marathon two-day contest over 96 boards would decide the outright winners. In addition to guaranteed places in bridge's *Hall of Fame*, the victors could expect to undertake a tour of the universe in the Federation's own

specially adapted luxurious Interplanetary Space Cruiser known as *Bridge One*.

Each player would have an easy-to-remember bridge name, which would soon be familiar to almost the entire Galaxy. A global marketing operation was ready to spring into action with the star players having their own merchandise, endorsements and master-class satellite programmes. For the duration of the event, the competitors would have the collective name as the new *Masters of the Universe*.

The top pair from Pluto, Minor and Major soon seated themselves in readiness for the opening match. Located on the very edge of the Solar System, Pluto is the smallest planet and has a very icy atmosphere. Consequently, the players wore specially designed suits to maintain a below-freezing body temperature.

## Last Year's Final

Their opponents were the reigning champions from Earth known simply as Black and Wood. They arrived to tumultuous applause reserved for two 25th Century gladiators able to hold razor sharp concentration over multiple boards and hours of play. Both players were in their prime with the very latest bionic implants. Last year's final had been a monumental victory for the Earth pair. Up against the favourites, Saturn, everything depended on the final board.

Sitting in the West seat, Black opened 1NT and played there in 'everyone's favourite contract'. 'Just my luck', he thought. 'I wonder how many championship finals have depended on the outcome of a one no-trump contract.'

This was the deal in question: ►

# Bridge in the 25th Century continued

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

The four of hearts was the lead and Wood tabled dummy carefully. Black's philosophy was always to make sure of the contract first and to be particularly careful if things looked too easy.

Consequently, he paid particular attention to the diamond suit: five tricks providing they break no worse than 3-1 (90% odds). He played the suit through in his mind and was suddenly horrified to realise that dummy would be obliged to win the fourth round. Bionic eye implants made it possible to look sideways without turning the head. The two crab-like players from Saturn known as Cross and Ruff were sitting motionless and emotionless. Black knew any mistake in the play would be fatal.

He called for the five of hearts, covered by the king from the South hand. Black let this win and won the heart return in dummy. He then crossed to a high diamond in hand and disposed of the 'blocking' diamond on the ace of hearts. Seven tricks he won and with it the Galaxy Cup.

## The Opening Match

Expecting an easy first round victory, Black and Wood underestimated the tenacity and determination of the Pluto pair. With nothing to lose, they bid and played with reckless abandonment. When, on one deal, Wood misinterpreted Black's lead-directing double of six spades, their opponents soon had twelve tricks neatly arranged in front of them. An audible gasp echoed

around the giant arena as spectators realised the defending champions had a real fight on their hands.

Defeat in the first round was something neither player was prepared to contemplate. Banishment to a remote bridge school on one of the outer planets would be their likely fate. The twentieth board gave the Earth pair a glimmer of hope. Playing in a 3NT contract, Pluto's number one player, Major, attempted to fool Black into the early play of his ace of diamonds. When in fact Black held it up, Major had no entry to his winners in the suit and the contract finished two down.

This seemed to mark the turning point for the Earth team, who went on to win the match by a good margin. The other first-round matches were soon over and the draw took place for the semi-final pairings. Earth would play Mars and Venus would play Neptune. Managers and trainers soon clustered around their respective teams.

## The Semi-Finals

The successful players negotiated substantial bonus payments, while the losers could only look forward to a long lonely journey back to their respective planets. It was even rumoured that the unfortunate Pluto contingent were planning to ask for political asylum rather than risk an encounter with the fearsome gravity of a black hole on the way home!

A team of highly programmed androids sat at tables around the players lounge in readiness to play pre-dealt practice boards designed to test the competitors at every conceivable level of play.

'We're in for a tough match', said Black to his personal trainer, Ming Delko. 'The Martians coasted through against Uranus with hardly a slip up. They call themselves Astro and Acol and have every intention of teleporting into the arena for maximum effect!' Ming raised his heavy hooded eyelids and looked across at Black. 'Just play your own game and don't let them get the upper hand', was all he said in reply. His strange features were the result of mixed parentage. His Earth mother had married Saturn's foremost bridge master, Janus

Delko.

The semi-final matches were soon ready to begin and the Earth players faced their Martian opponents. Black and Wood were simply dressed in casual green trousers and matching shirt with an emblem of the Earth emblazoned on the back. By contrast, the Martian pair had dressed formally in matching black suits and crisp white shirts. Each had a head of steel grey hair and an imperious manner. They raised their hands to acknowledge the applause and displayed the unusual webbing between each finger. They neither smiled nor acknowledged their Earth opponents.

The match took the form of swings and roundabouts with each side taking turn to gain an advantage. The Earth pair went slightly ahead because of this deal:

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

Astro opened one spade and raised his partner's two-heart response direct to game. Wood, sitting in the West seat, pondered his opening lead. Normally a passive, unassuming player his fingers hovered over the club jack. He leaned backwards for a moment in his thickly padded chair. The auction was swift and assertive. They did not stagger into a game contract so maybe an attacking, unorthodox lead would be best. Wood duly placed the king of diamonds on the table.

Dummy went down and Acol realised that overtricks were now out of the question and even the contract was in jeopardy. The defenders took two diamond winners, trumped a diamond and made the heart queen to defeat the contract. The tension surrounding the players became electric. 'Nothing I could do on that lead', said a disgruntled Acol. Wood decided to join in: ▶

## Bridge in the 25th Century **continued**

'Just lucky, I suppose. A club lead gives you an overtrick.' Not to let his partner outdo him, Black interjected, '3NT is cold and it looks like four spades might just make – quite a solid five-two fit.'

The two Martians became visibly agitated at this unwelcome conversation and they called for the next board. Playing with ever-growing confidence, the Earth players completed the match with a healthy victory margin and took a standing ovation from the vast arena. 'One step nearer to that tropical hideaway on Callisto', said a delighted Wood.

### Comfortable Win

The other semi-final saw a comfortable and decisive win by the all-female team from Venus headed by their star players Overcall and Overbid. Their opponents from Neptune never really got going. Venus outplayed them right from the start and Neptune suffered the indignity of the biggest defeat of the competition. Sympathy came in the form of understanding for the long arduous journey to the competition from their lonely corner of the solar system. Encounters with meteor swarms and the asteroid belt had taken its toll on the players.

Seated high up in the President's viewing box, Milo Gort grunted with satisfaction. 'The female players from Venus will give the Earth champions some serious competition.'

With bonus payments and other inducements promised to the finalists, it was vital to maintain a clear perspective. It was also hinted that the winning team captain and his partner would become roving Ambassadors with a schedule that included meetings with ruling dignitaries from all eight of the member planets. Already rich beyond imagination, Black and Wood knew that successfully defending the Galaxy Cup would propel them into a super elite that money could never buy.

Players, managers and dignitaries assembled on the playing platform and the first set of pre-dealt boards emerged from an electronically sealed box. The boards would ignite instantly if anyone made an unauthorised attempt to view the hands. The female players from

Venus were identically dressed in silver suits with gold buttons. Jet-black hair showed off their white, almost porcelain complexion. An all-female team had never before won the Galaxy Cup so the estimated viewing numbers were astronomical. Both teams received a standing ovation before a hushed silence marked the start of the match.

Black looked sideways at Overcall and said in a friendly tone, 'You've done very well to reach the final and second place will be no disgrace!' Overcall gave a coy smile and replied in a deep sultry voice, 'Thank you. Any advice you can give us when we take off on our victory tour in *Bridge One* will be most appreciated.' Everyone chuckled at this and play began.

### The Final

The Venus girls proved worthy opponents and play proceeded at a steady, cautionary pace. This deal provided an opportunity for Overbid to show her worth:

			<b>Overcall</b>		
			♠ 8 5 4		
			♥ Q 2		
			♦ K Q 9 4 2		
			♣ 9 8 6		
<b>Black</b>		<b>Wood</b>			
♠ J 10		♠ Q 9 6			
♥ A 9 8		♥ J 10 7 5 4 3			
♦ J 8 6 3		♦ 5			
♣ A 10 7 3		♣ Q J 5			
			<b>Overbid</b>		
			♠ A K 7 3 2		
			♥ K 6		
			♦ A 10 7		
			♣ K 4 2		

Playing five-card majors, Overbid opened one spade in the South seat. Overcall raised to two spades and Overbid wasted no time in going straight to game. With no attractive lead on offer, Black led the spade jack. Only accustomed to positive thinking, Overbid realised she had a potential five losers should East gain the lead and play a club through her king.

Both girls had the promise of their own luxury Bridge Leisure Complex on

one of the dedicated holiday satellites if they won the competition. Second place would mean a return to the rather drab teaching academy and anonymity. In addition, Overcall had the promise of a marriage contract to an immensely wealthy Martian. 'Owns a whole fleet of interplanetary passenger cruisers and he's only 169 years of age' exclaimed a delighted Overcall. Defeat would put this proposal in dire jeopardy.

Overbid let the jack win the first trick and won the spade continuation in hand. She then drew the remaining trump and continued with the diamond ten to dummy's king. She crossed to the diamond ace and, when East showed out, finessed the diamond nine on the way back, thereafter discarding two club losers on dummy's diamonds. The king-queen of hearts ensured a tenth trick. 'Nicely played' said a generous Black. 'I thought we might have got you down on that one.'

The first day's play ended with the Venus girls marginally ahead. 'It's going to be tough tomorrow', said a tired looking Wood. 'Those girls are razor sharp and are ready to pounce on any error we make.' 'We', said Black, 'don't you mean errors that *you* make?' This he said in good humour and he meant it to relax the players in readiness for the hand-by-hand analysis that was sure to follow. After that, practice with the pre-programmed androids would continue far into the night.

In contrast, the Venus girls looked fresh and bright as they prepared to teleport into the players lounge. Overcall said, in her deep throaty voice, 'I think the realisation that we might win is starting to cloud their judgement. Did you see the crestfallen look Wood gave when he went down in that spade contract?' 'Yes', replied Overbid with a chuckle. 'It was board 45. I sensed his anxiety by the way he rolled his bionic eyes!' 'Perhaps the eye roll was meant for you', said Overcall in a mischievous tone.

Hushed excitement greeted the players as they arrived for the final confrontation. The Venus team looked spectacular in identical gold suits with silver buttons while the Earth players remained nondescript in their rather drab green trousers and matching shirts.

Wood had hardly slept all night while his finely tuned brain recalled hand after hand where unforced errors had seen the points and, ultimately, the Trophy ▶

**Bridge in the  
25th Century**  
continued

slipping away. The Venus team would have forged further ahead but for some inspired analytical play from Black.

‘Nothing I could do partner’, said a desperate Wood after going down in an impossible 6NT. ‘Perhaps not’, replied Black in a sarcastic tone. ‘Maybe we can arrange for you to spend some time at the No-Trump Academy on Uranus. Just imagine all the practice you would get.’ ‘Is there really such a place?’ asked Overbid gazing quizzically at Black. ‘Oh, yes, it’s really part of a Bridge Penal Colony! It was set up sometime in the 23rd century for people with bad table manners. Two warnings and off they went – just like that.’ Black looked closely at Overbid as he spoke and marvelled at the pure black eyes. They were like the tinted windows of a sleek space cruiser. They could see out, but you could not see in.

**The Winners**

The outcome was inevitable with the Venus team winning by a comfortable margin. The girls received a standing ovation when those gathered heard the final victory score. A floating podium took the winners up to the President’s box high up in the arena. Milo Gort beamed with delight as he welcomed the girls into what would soon become a series of official engagements throughout the solar system.

Back in the playing arena the now forgotten losing finalists sat stunned with disbelief. ‘Don’t look so glum’, said Black. At least I haven’t vaporised you and there’s always next year to look forward to. ■

**Mr Bridge**  
**AT**  
**THEOBALDS**  
**PARK**

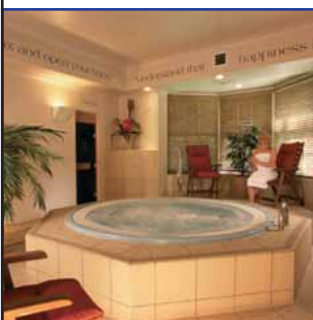


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----- **BOOKING FORM** -----

Please book me for ..... places,  
Single ..... Double ..... Twin .....

for the Theobalds Park weekend(s) of .....

Mr/Mrs/Miss .....

Address.....

Postcode ..... ☎ .....

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

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

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


Expiry: ..... CVV..... Issue No.....  
(CVV is the last 3 numbers on the signature strip)

**Mr Bridge**, Ryden Grange, Knaphill, Surrey GU21 2TH  
☎ 01483 489961 Fax 01483 797302  
e-mail: leanora@mrbridge.co.uk  
website: www.holidaybridge.com

## Mr Bridge

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- ◆ Bidding quiz & two seminars (on duplicate weekends only)

## BOOKING FORM

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Single ..... Double .....

at Milton Hill House weekend(s) of

Mr/Mrs/Miss .....

Address.....

Postcode .....

☎ .....

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

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

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

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

☎ 01483 489961 Fax 01483 797302

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

website: [www.holidaybridge.com](http://www.holidaybridge.com)

## PROGRAMME

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

### FRIDAY

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

**1745 to 1830**  
Welcome drinks reception

**1830 to 2000**  
DINNER

**2015 BRIDGE SESSION 1**  
DUPLICATE PAIRS

### SATURDAY

**0800 to 0930**  
BREAKFAST

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

**1230 to 1330**  
COLD BUFFET LUNCH

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

**1815 to 2000**  
DINNER

**2015 BRIDGE SESSION 3**  
DUPLICATE PAIRS

### SUNDAY

**0800 to 0930**  
BREAKFAST

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

**1230 to 1400**  
CARVERY LUNCH

**1400 to 1645**  
**BRIDGE SESSION 4**  
DUPLICATE PAIRS

## Mr Bridge AT MILTON HILL HOUSE



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**7-9 Nov (£209)**  
Splinters & Cue-bids  
Bernard Magee

**28-30 Nov (£209)**  
Thinking Defence  
Bernard Magee

## No Single Supplement

Manor house rooms are available at a supplement.

The remaining bedrooms are housed in a block about 25 yards away from the main hotel reached via a covered walkway.