

Q Should we leave the card for the final contract on the table during the play?
Mrs O Collins, Cambridge.

A I would prefer that the contract is not displayed since that teaches players to remember the bidding.

That is just my view. It is a matter for the club whether they allow, or even mandate, this practice.



Q 1. Kindly explain the difference between 'Duplicate Pairs' and 'Teams of Four'.

2. How do you score Individual Events?

Dr C S Bhaysar,
Croydon, Surrey.

A In Duplicate Pairs, you and your partner are a team of two. You compare your scores on each board to everyone else in the same direction, scoring two points for every pair you beat and one point for every pair you tie with on the board.

In Teams of Four, you, your partner and another pair make up a team of four people. The other pair sit in the opposite direction to you, playing the same boards against the same teams, and you compare your score with them, usually using a system known as 'International Match Points' or 'IMPs' for short.

David Stevenson answers all queries based on the facts supplied by the letter writer. Neither Mr Bridge nor David Stevenson has any way of knowing whether those facts are correct or complete.

In an individual, the scoring is the same as for Duplicate Pairs, but each individual has their own score, and they move differently from their partner. As with Pairs, it is possible to play a Swiss movement, or an ordinary movement.



Q 1. Before the first card played, my partner asks 'Any questions?' What questions should I ask?

2. After three passes I am sitting with four aces (the rest 2, 3 and 4s); can I still pass even though I hold 16 points?

Mrs Elizabeth Pringle,
Wendover, Bucks.

A 1. You can ask the meaning of any calls you do not understand. If the bidding goes INT on your left, pass from partner, 3♠ on your right, alerted, and you have no intention of bidding, it is usually best not to ask at that stage. Normally, you should find out before the play starts, so ask if you are on lead: ask after your partner has led face down if she is on lead. 3♠ might turn out to be a shortage! People often ask at inappropriate times, for example, before the final pass if they will not be on lead: far better is to wait until partner has led face down.

2. Certainly, you may pass: nobody can force you to make any call you do not want to. Mind you, I do not advise it: aces combine well with honour cards in partner's hand, and hands full of aces tend to play better than you expect from the point-count, rather than worse.

Mr Bridge

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David Stevenson on Bridge Laws continued

Q My partner and I play a raise of 1NT to 2NT as exactly 12 points. Are we right not to alert?

David Wilkes, Shoreham-by-Sea, West Sussex.

A You are right. It is a natural bid and needs no alert.

Over the years, some have said that such-and-such an agreement needs an alert because you know something the opponents do not. The alerting regulations contain no such rule. Only if the meaning is very surprising (for example, if 2NT is a slam try) or artificial (for example, 2NT is a transfer to diamonds) should you alert it.



Q In Rubber Bridge: 1) If declarer touches a card, is that a played card?

2) May one declare 'honours' while playing the hand?

Mrs Denise Winton, Poole, Dorset.

A Declarer may re-arrange the dummy. Careful declarers use the chess term *j'adoube* before doing so to avoid misunderstandings. Also, when reaching for a card, declarer may move a card above or below the card that she is reaching for to make it easier to get at the card she wants. In neither case need she play a card she touches. Other than these situations, a touched card is a played card.

A player may declare honours from the end of the auction up until the rubber is agreed. However, it is unwise to do so before it is clear that she has them

because this gives the opponents information. A defender should not do so before it is clear to all that she holds them because this would be unauthorised information for partner. Once it is clear that she has honours, it is normal to declare them immediately.



Q Should we call the director when declarer (an opponent) looks back at the cards already played? I did say when it happened that she should not do it.

Mrs C Harper, Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire,

A Of course: whenever anyone does anything wrong, call the Director. You should not be telling opponents they should not do things: that is the Director's job.



Q If you have opening points, must you open?

Mrs I Cramond, Stranraer.

A There is no rule that you have to open if you have opening points. What you call on any hand is what you judge best. If you think the hand is too poor, pass and do not worry!

Different players often take different views of hands, so a passed-out board at one table can be played in game at another! You scored a zero. Playing match-points, you beat all the players sitting your way who go minus, and tie with any others who passed it out. Whether to pass or open light in third or fourth hand is one of the judgements of the game. ▶

Q I was South and due to bid (using a bidding box). I held six diamonds and intended to open 1♦. West then bid 2♦. I then saw that I had displayed 1♥ by mistake. North and East passed. I said that I had got myself into trouble and did not know how to rectify it. I decided to bid 2NT, thinking this would end the bidding. In fact, West bid 3♦, North and East passed and I doubled.

West went down heavily. I then said what I had done. West felt cheated and I had to agree, but nobody knew what to do about it.

Tony Baker, Woodbridge, Suffolk.

A Bridge is a game of mistakes, and players are always making them. Your mistakes mostly cost, but sometimes luck is with you and a mistake gains.

That is what happened here. You pulled out the wrong card. Actually, you could have changed it so long as you did so as soon as you realized your mistake. This is because it was a mechanical error, partner had not yet called and you had changed it without pause for thought. In that case, West could retract her 2♦ bid.

Once you had not changed it, you have every right to try to gain from the situation. The one thing you really did wrong was to comment during the auction. That gives partner unauthorised information, which might make life difficult for him.

As for West, she has not been cheated: it was just bad luck. If you err every time you play her, she will gain far more often than she loses, but she will not gain every time.

Q My wife and I play rubber bridge with two friends; we discussed the use of the word 'stop' before making a bid.

I said that you should use it only in duplicate to give time for the next bidder to think.

They have never played duplicate and said that in rubber bridge you use it to tell your partner that you have at least sixteen points! Mr Richard Routledge, Solihull, West Midlands.

A You are quite right. It is a duplicate device to give players a chance to think without creating unauthorised information over jump bids. No doubt, some rubber circles have taken it up – the rubber laws under Appendix 2 mentioned it as an option – and it is just the same as in duplicate. What has happened is that a group of rubber players have misunderstood its use and have changed it to a very unfortunate and quite illegal signal, contrary to the rubber laws.



Q At a recent teams' event, the opponents bid:

| | |
|------|----|
| 1NT | 2♦ |
| 2♥ | 3♦ |
| Pass | |

They announced the opening as 12 – 14 HCPs and the response as a transfer to hearts. Being on lead, I asked whether responder had five hearts and four or five diamonds; the opener informed me that responder was showing a weak take-out

in diamonds.

The 3♦ contract made but our teammates played the board in 1NT and made only five tricks with a swing of 7 IMPs against us.

I believe the 2♦/3♦ bids are illegal but cannot find chapter and verse. I would appreciate your comments. Also, if there was an illegal bid and it was possible to have called the director, what penalty, if any, should have followed?

Paul Starling, Cheshire.

A All responses are permitted to 1NT, so this is a legal way for responding. Even so, players must let opponents know what they are doing. If they play a 2♦ response as hearts or a weak take-out in diamonds, they must do the following:

1. They must alert it: they do not announce it.
2. In answer to a question, they must describe it as 'hearts or a weak take-out in diamonds': it is not a transfer nor must they describe it as a transfer.
3. They must describe it correctly on the convention card, not calling it a transfer.

A transfer promises one particular suit, so it is not fair to call this response a transfer.

Since it is legal, no penalty is suitable. However, if someone does play an illegal agreement – for example, a 1NT opening with a point range of 6-8 – then the board is played out. The pair

playing the illegal agreement get average minus, their opponents average plus, unless their opponents did better than this, in which case the score stands.

Finally, since the description of 2♦ as a transfer was misinformation, the Director could award an adjusted score if the misinformation damaged your side.



Q At the end of a rubber, do you round 50 up or down to get to the nearest 100?

B Becker, Wimbledon.

A There is no general rule. Your club or circle should have its own rule. We always used to round upwards at University!



Q 1NT vulnerable doubled, made, +180 points, 1 off -200 points; is this fair?

Mr Michael Bowler, Bentley, Hampshire.

A Yes – why not? It is a level playing field: the scoring is the same for everyone.

Nobody forces you to bid as everyone else does: if you do not like going one off doubled in 1NT when vulnerable, why not try a strong no-trump? ■

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Best Acol Sequences

Q What is the best Acol sequence on the following hand with no opposition bidding?

| Dealer East. N/S Game. Teams. | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| West | East |
| ♠ K 3 | ♠ A J 5 4 |
| ♥ A Q 10 2 | ♥ 5 |
| ♦ 9 8 7 3 | ♦ A 10 4 |
| ♣ Q 7 5 | ♣ A K 10 9 3 |

Patrick Dunham, Coleorton, Leics.



A My sequence is:

| West | East |
|------|------|
| | 1♣ |
| 1♥ | 1♠ |
| 3♣ | 3NT |

On the second round, West bids 3♣ as I do not fancy 2NT with these diamonds (partner might have a singleton) and I normally play fourth suit (2♦) as game-forcing.

East might bid 3♦ over 3♣ since there could be a slam if partner has just the right cards (e.g. K-x of spades, A-x-x-x of hearts and Q-J-x-x of clubs). My partners never have the

perfect cards! In any case, West would bid 3NT over 3♦, counting 9-8-x-x as a partial stopper.



Q In a recent club duplicate, our hands were:

| West | East |
|-----------|--------------|
| ♠ A K 9 3 | ♠ 10 8 6 5 2 |
| ♥ A 9 6 5 | ♥ Void |
| ♦ K 4 | ♦ J 10 8 6 |
| ♣ Q 9 8 | ♣ J 10 5 3 |

As happened at many tables, I opened 1♥ as West and was left to struggle there, going three off. Minus 150 was poor as the opponents could make only 140 in hearts and 120 in no-trumps.

Someone commented that my partner should have tried to improve the contract by bidding 1♠, which would have worked here, with nine tricks available in spades. Do you agree?

Alan Cooke, by e-mail.

A Some players respond on next to nothing but I think this is unsound. The 1♠ response would have worked this time but often

opener will rebid 2♥ or 3♥ and the response will not have improved the contract. The other snag with super-light responses is that opener needs an absolute monster to make a jump-shift rebid. I think you were just unlucky.



Q I held this hand as West:

| | |
|-------------|--|
| ♠ Q 8 5 | |
| ♥ 10 2 | |
| ♦ K Q 7 3 2 | |
| ♣ J 8 6 | |

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| | | 1♠ | 2♣ |
| Pass | Pass | 2♥ | Pass |
| 2♠ | End | | |

East made 12 tricks.

Without the overcall, I would have bid 2♦, which is probably not right with eight points. Do you agree with my pass over 2♣?

Pamela Ford by e-mail.

A I would have bid 2♠ on the first round, with or without the overcall.

I agree with you that eight points and a five-card suit is not enough for a change-of-

suit response at the two level. However, with eight points, passing is overly cautious. Particularly when partner's suit is spades, having three-card support and a ruffing value (the doubleton heart) is fine for raising partner to the two level. After passing over 2♣, you might have tried to catch up by giving jump preference to 3♠ on the next round.



Q I would like to know the current thinking regarding the best defensive bidding system after a 2♦ multi opening (6-card major or strong no-trump).

Ruth Mackinlay by e-mail.

A I suggest the following in second seat: Double, 12-14 or 18+. Partner initially assumes you have a weak no-trump hand. 2♥, 2♠, 3♣, 3♦, natural non-forcing. 2NT, 15-18 balanced. Pass then Double – take-out.

In fourth seat, a simple method is to play the same after 2♦-pass-2♥ as you would after 2♥(weak)-pass-pass and the same after 2♦-pass-2♠ as you would after 2♠(weak)-pass-pass. ▶

Q My partner and I had always understood that we could only use Gerber (4♣ to ask for aces) if we had not bid clubs previously. Is this a rule or just an agreement between partners?

Ian Hudspith,
Lubencham, Leics.

A An agreement that 4♣ cannot be Gerber if your side has bid clubs naturally sounds a good idea if you play Gerber.

Another way to reduce the risk of confusion is to use 4NT for ace asking (though even this is not 100% guaranteed!). Many pairs no longer play Gerber at all; if they do use it, they do so only in a set sequence such as 1NT-4♣. In general, a bid of 4♣ is too useful to give up for Gerber.



Q In BRIDGE 90, there is much about the rule of 20. I have only ever come a cropper on it. The wonderful weak two saves all the hassle: 6-3 hands with 9 points pre-empt beautifully, or 6-4, or 6-5, though you are not meant to do it with a concealed major. 6-3 (or 6-4 and 6-5) with ten points and you are back with your selection of alternatives including pass and the weak two. Am I alone in detesting the rule of 20?

Robert Hobhouse, Langport, Somerset by e-mail.

A In a hand with 9 points and 6-3 in the longest suits you have a total of 18 and not enough for a one-

level opening. As you say, assuming you play weak twos, a weak two normally does the job nicely with such a hand. Weak bids (like a weak two or a three level pre-empt) do not need to satisfy the rule of 20. I do not use the rule of 20 myself, preferring the more accurate (though more complicated) rule of 22; this takes account of defensive tricks as well. Watch out for the rule of 22 coming soon in the maxims series of articles.



Q My partner opened 1NT (12-14). The opponents passed throughout. My hand was:

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

I bid 3♣. Is this correct? If not, what should I have responded?

My partner did not understand the bid. We ended in 4♣, but 6♣ is the correct contract, as she has club support and the slam is virtually lay-down.

Gloria Stuart, Edinburgh.

A Playing natural responses, 3♣ seems fine. It is forcing to at least game and, since you will often not bother to show a minor if you see no hope of a slam, suggests slam interest. Another idea, as the spades are so good (and score more, if you make the same number of tricks), is to treat the suits as equal length. You might start with 2♥ (transfer to spades) and then bid clubs twice. ▶

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Ask Julian Pottage continued

Q Please can you help with this bidding problem?

| West | East |
|------------|-------------|
| ♠ A J 6 4 | ♠ Q |
| ♥ A 10 9 2 | ♥ K Q 7 4 |
| ♦ 6 4 2 | ♦ A K Q J 8 |
| ♣ K 9 | ♣ 8 6 2 |

| West | East |
|------|--------------|
| 1NT | 2♣ (Stayman) |
| 2♥ | ? |

Alan Solomon, Wimbledon.

A Assuming I thought partner would understand the bid, I would bid 3♠. This is a splinter, agreeing hearts and showing a singleton or void in spades. Logic says you cannot mean the bid to show spades, since if you had a long spade suit, you would have started either with 2♥ (playing transfers) or 3♠ rather than with Stayman.

The full sequence could be as follows:

| West | East |
|------|------|
| 1NT | 2♣ |
| 2♥ | 3♠ |
| 4♣ | 4NT |
| 5♥ | 6♥ |

West's 4♣ cue-bid with a second-round control may look unusual, but the king of clubs must be useful when East is not short in the suit.

Splinters are very useful for finding slams. Almost all the best players use them. Having a single bid that shows three things at once – strength, support and shortage – simplifies so many auctions.

Without splinters, this is not an easy hand to bid.

Q My RHO opened 1NT (12-14), LHO raised to 3NT.

I led the jack of hearts from A-J-10-5. Dummy had the bare 9. Partner contributed the 6 and declarer the 7. Playing pairs, I feared that declarer had held up from

♥K-Q-x-x and switched. The first trick was the only trick we made. Partner held ♥K-Q-6-4-3-2!

Had partner overtaken with the ♥Q and returned the ♥4 (original fourth best) I might have read the position correctly: win with the ♥10, cash the ♥A and led my ♥5 to partner's ♥K for him to take two further hearts.

Should I have continued the suit in any event? Which card would I play? Geoff Maskall, Cumbria.

A Your suggestion that partner should overtake the jack of hearts with the queen sounds a good one. Overtaking would indicate possession of the king as well. Even on the actual play of the six, you should probably have worked out the position. With the two, three and four of hearts all missing, the six was surely encouraging. Without knowing the full deal, it is hard to say for sure which heart to lead at trick two. The five works best if partner started with 9-6-x-x and has a side entry. The ten or ace works better if partner started with Q-8-6-x-x but no entry – though then partner might well have played the eight rather than the six. Facing K-Q-6-4-3-2, it would not matter which one you led! ■

E-mail your questions for Julian to:
julianpottage@mrbridge.co.uk

The Least of All Evils

Most hands that find their way into bridge columns are games, slams or sacrifices. Understandably, they are easier to write up than lowly part scores and, of course, invariably more sensational. Nevertheless, every now and then an instructive little gem emerges and positively begs for an airing, even if just for once it pushes big brother out of the limelight.

Part-Score Hand

You might like to put yourselves in East's shoes with this hand:

Dealer East.
East-West Game.

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|---|--|---|--|---|--|--|
| <table style="border: none; text-align: center;"> <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 | | ♠ A Q 3 ♥ K Q 8 5 2 ♦ 7 5 ♣ J 8 6 |
| | N | | | | | | | | | |
| W | | E | | | | | | | | |
| | S | | | | | | | | | |

Not a great hand but of course, you are going to open. There is something to be said for 1NT; right shape, right point count and solves the rebid problem. Against that – almost all the points are in two suits and at least there is a respectable five-card major. So you settle for 1♥. The next hand passes and partner responds 1♠. RHO sticks his oar in with 2♦ and you find yourself faced with another close decision. Should you rebid your hearts, support partner's spades or Pass? I think it is a close thing between 2♠ and Pass but you have a very minimum opening and have the opportunity to bale out, so perhaps it is right to take it. No matter whether you bid 2♠ or Pass, South bids 3♣ and everybody passes.

This has been the bidding:

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| | | 1♥ | Pass |
| 1♠ | 2♦ | Pass | 3♣ |
| End | | | |

Partner leads the six of hearts and this is what you see.

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

You cover dummy's heart with your queen and declarer wins with the ace. Declarer plays the ace and another club, your partner following with the queen and then winning the second round with the king. At trick four, West switches to the eight of spades, five from dummy and you win with the queen, declarer contributing the ten. When you cash the jack of clubs, West discards the two of spades and dummy discards the three of diamonds. Then you cash the king of hearts, on which West discards the two of diamonds. This is the position from your point of view.

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

One More Trick Needed

You have four tricks in the bag and need only one more to defeat the contract, but you seem to be endplayed unless the ace of spades stands up. Partner has shown a singleton heart and a doubleton club so must have ten cards between spades and diamonds, but remember, he discarded

the two of spades on the jack of clubs and he surely would not have done that with four spades and six diamonds. So you assume partner to be five-five in those two suits, which means that declarer has no more spades. Since you know he holds six clubs and five hearts, he must hold a singleton diamond. Oh dear! East cannot lead a spade, cannot lead hearts (the pips are too unfavourable) and certainly will not want to play right into the ace, queen of diamonds. So what is he to do?

Action at Trick Seven

If you have decided on your action at trick seven, let us look at this full deal.

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

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

Unpalatable though it may seem, a diamond from East is the only way to avert a North-South plus score (Well done if you found it and I am sure you did as it really is the least of all evils). Yes, on the second round, declarer is able to discard a heart loser – the four – but then, when he returns to hand to play off his trumps and cash the nine of hearts, he has to concede the seven of hearts to East's eight at trick thirteen. ■

Freddie North is one of Britain's most popular bridge writers.



No Thank You, Mr Blackwood

On May 24, 1935, Albert Morehead the editor of the American bridge magazine *The Bridge World*, wrote a rejection letter for a proposed article sent in by a reader. The writer of the article was Easley Blackwood from Indianapolis. In his article, Blackwood was suggesting the use of 4NT in slam auctions as a simple ace-asking enquiry. The partner of the 4NT bidder would show the number of aces held.

In rejecting the article, *The Bridge World* was following the line dictated by the magazine's publisher, Ely Culbertson. Culbertson had his own more complicated gadget, the Culbertson 4-5 no-trump convention – see below – and had no desire for anybody else's idea to usurp this.

Interestingly, had *The Bridge World* accepted Blackwood's original article, we would be playing 'Wormwood' to ask for aces. He was fearful of publicity as he did not wish his employers, the giant Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, to know that their youngest branch manager, in any of their offices throughout America, was keen on bridge. Blackwood therefore asked that, if they accepted the article, they would publish it under the *nom de plume* of Ernest Wormwood.

Slam Missing Two Aces

Bidding a slam, missing two aces, is not usually a good idea. The opponents cash their two winners and the slam goes down before you are able to get going. In the first few years of Contract Bridge, there was no easy bidding method to counter this all-too-familiar problem.

At that time – the early 1930s – top dog in the bidding system stakes was the brash American Ely Culbertson. Thanks to a combination of his bridge prowess,

business acumen and out-and-out showmanship, most of America followed Culbertson's published bidding ideas.

Culbertson's Slam Try

Culbertson's own idea to solve the slam-bidding challenge was a complicated method called the 4-5 no-trump convention. If you sensed a slam was in the air, you could continue past game by bidding 4NT. The bid, described by Culbertson as a 'slam inference', told your partner that you had either three aces or two aces and the king of a suit genuinely bid by the partnership, and expressed interest in continuing towards slam. Partner absorbed the information given and responded with – depending on aces and kings held – a sign-off or a variety of forward-going bids. A response of 5NT, for example, shows that responder holds two aces or alternatively one ace and all the kings of genuinely bid suits. With what the 4NT bidder has guaranteed so far, a 5NT response means that the partnership has all the key cards and that the slam is going to be a good one.

Simpler Method Needed

The method has genuine merit, but it is far from easy to use. There are also cases where a slam is possible but neither player's hand meets the initial requirements for a 4NT bid. Here is the deal from 1933 that prompted Easley Blackwood to propose a simpler method:

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

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | N | |
| W | | E |
| | S | |

| West | East |
|------|------|
| | 1♠ |
| 3♥ | 3♠ |
| 4♠ | 6♠ |

East-West were using the Culbertson 4-5 no-trump convention. As the Culbertson bid of 4NT guaranteed either two aces and the king of a bid suit or three aces, East could not use it. Instead, he just gambled that West had the right cards and bid the slam directly. The defenders had no difficulty in cashing their two aces. In his defence, East pointed out that West could easily have held A-Q-x-x-x in hearts, in which case the slam would be cold.

In the post-mortem, Blackwood questioned the Culbertson methods. He thought that it was too much for the 4NT bid to be both an asking bid and a telling bid. Instead, said Blackwood, why not let this bid be just a simple question: 'Partner, how many aces do you have?' Blackwood's idea was that the responses could be steps:

- 5♣ = 0 ace
- 5♦ = 1 ace
- 5♥ = 2 aces
- 5♠ = 3 aces

Finally, with all four aces, thought Blackwood, the responder could bid 5♣, the zero response. The fact that 5♣ shows either no ace of all four should not be a cause for concern as it is always possible to distinguish which. This double use of 5♣ allows the 4NT bidder to follow with a 5NT bid. 5NT guarantees that the partnership holds all the aces and asks about kings on the same scale.

Local experts quickly took up Blackwood's simple ace-asking ideas and the following year, a good Indianapolis team used it successfully ►

in a regional tournament in Cincinnati. This drew the attention of players from as far away as New York, making Blackwood worried that an expert from another locality would publish his 4NT bid and claim the credit. He had been reluctant to publish himself, but fear of losing the credit crystallised his mind. So, at the end of 1934, he wrote a clear description of his convention and sent it to *The Bridge World* together with a request to use the Wormwood *nom-de-plume*.

Blackwood's 4NT is Popular

A good idea is a good idea. Despite Culbertson's rebuttal, Blackwood's 4NT bid spread quickly by word of mouth.

By 1938, Culbertson had to acknowledge the bid and presented it in his own publications, under Blackwood's real name, as an alternative to the Culbertson 4-5 no-trump convention. 'There is little to recommend the Blackwood convention except its simplicity,' sniffed Culbertson in his *Official Book of Contract Bridge*, published in 1942.

Ironically, the 'Culbertson 4-5' remained the recommended slam tool of the Acol system well into the 1960s, although many Acol players used Blackwood.

Over the years, there have been many suggestions for improving Blackwood – a convention called Byzantine Blackwood had a vogue in the 1970s – but in the last few years Roman Key-Card Blackwood, which designates the king of the agreed trump suit as a fifth 'ace', has swept the tournament world.

Blackwood, the man, was a tireless worker for bridge. He wrote several books and many magazine and newspaper articles. He established a bridge club in Indianapolis and after retiring, taught bridge on cruise liners. He took on the role of Executive Secretary of the American Contract Bridge League in 1968, after a period of disarray in the organisation, and in three years, turned the ACBL round and left it on a firm financial footing. He died at his Indianapolis home 1992, aged 89. His son, also Easley, survived him, achieving his own fame as a prominent composer and conductor. ■

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DECLARER PLAY QUIZ



by **David Huggett**

(Answers on page 53)

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

1.

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

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | N | |
| W | | E |
| | S | |

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

You are declarer in 3NT and West leads the ♠J. East plays the ♠K, which you win with the ♠A. How do you plan the play?

3.

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

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | N | |
| W | | E |
| | S | |

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

You are declarer in 4♠ and West leads the ♥Q. How do you plan the play?

2.

| | |
|---|-----------|
| ♠ | A 7 3 |
| ♥ | J 9 8 6 2 |
| ♦ | 8 7 3 |
| ♣ | A 2 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | N | |
| W | | E |
| | S | |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| ♠ | K Q 6 4 |
| ♥ | A Q 5 4 3 |
| ♦ | 5 |
| ♣ | K Q 6 |

You are declarer in 6♥ and West leads the ♦K followed by the ♦A. How do you plan the play?

4.

| | |
|---|---------|
| ♠ | A K Q |
| ♥ | Q 7 6 5 |
| ♦ | 8 7 5 |
| ♣ | Q J 7 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | N | |
| W | | E |
| | S | |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| ♠ | 4 3 |
| ♥ | A K 9 4 3 |
| ♦ | A 6 |
| ♣ | K 10 9 3 |

You are declarer in 6♥ and West leads the ♦K, which you win with the ♦A. How do you plan the play?



The Green Baize Cup

by Michael Scarrott

My skill on the golf course and your luck on the bridge table – that sounds like a winning combination to me.’ James Vane looked across at his friend and golf partner, Eddie Bell and gave a wry chuckle. ‘Don’t you mean *my* skill at bridge and *your* luck at golf? Your tee shot on the 12th went into the trees, bounced around a bit and then, what do you know, came back out onto the fairway!’

‘Now compare that with my skill in that 6♠ contract yesterday evening. The two red aces were out against me and I still made it.’ ‘So you did,’ replied Eddie in a tone of mock respect, ‘your void in the heart suit probably helped just a little bit I suppose.’ They both laughed and looked closely at the golf club notice board.

New Competition

‘Yes, there it is,’ said Eddie in an enthusiastic tone, ‘a competition will take place next Saturday for the Green Baize Cup. Eighteen holes of golf in the morning followed by lunch and 18 deals of bridge in the afternoon. It is a Pair’s event for men and women, with combined Stableford points for the golf added to match points scored in the afternoon duplicate bridge event. A maximum of 18 teams can enter.’

Team Play in Bridge and Golf

‘Sounds like it could be fun,’ said James. ‘If you’ve got your pen handy, we’ll put our names down right away. If you think about it, quite a few golf clubs have active bridge sections. It is a great combination. Physical *and* mental exercise both demand lots of stamina.

The competition will involve team play for both bridge *and* golf. While everyone accepts that bridge always involves full partnership co-operation, team golf can be quite nerve wracking. Take the great Tiger Woods for example. Just imagine him as your playing partner when you miss a crucial putt. You would soon realise they don’t call him Tiger for nothing!’

The Mental Approach

‘The mental approach to both games is very important these days,’ added Eddie, ‘club golfers can now take advantage of performance coaching involving psychology and sports hypnosis sessions. It is all about having positive thoughts and not worrying about the bunkers or water hazards. Perhaps we can organise some sessions for the bridge section. What do you think?’

James grinned before replying. ‘I rather like the idea of a hypnosis session. Anything to cure no-trump phobia would be welcome.’

Golf and Bridge Jargon

‘Some of the jargon can have similar meanings; a par at golf and contract made are the same. A birdie is the same as one overtrick and an eagle equivalent to two overtricks. A bogey would be the same as going one off in your contract. It would raise an eyebrow or two, I’m sure, if you commented in a casual manner to an opponent who had gone two tricks off that they had scored a double-bogey.’

‘Yes,’ continued Eddie quick to join in the fun. ‘What about when your opponent on the golf course tells you to

pick up your ball without having to make the putt? It is a sporting gesture for when your ball is very close to the hole. The best-remembered example is probably when Jack Nicklaus conceded Tony Jacklin’s final putt on the 18th green in the 1969 Ryder Cup. That resulted in a tied match. Just try to imagine if your opponents at the end of an evening’s club duplicate pick up dummy’s last card from the table and say that they will give you that one!’

Handicaps for the Golf

‘We both get full handicap allowance for the morning golf and tee off in threesomes. Do not take it for granted... some of the ladies can play quite a good game... and as for the bridge. You may remember we got completely done over by Liz and Brenda at last week’s duplicate?’ James looked puzzled and commented ‘that he simply refused to dwell in the past where bridge was concerned, although he could recall a few hands on which he did particularly well!’

A Poor Effort

Eddie took an out-of-date notice off the board and started scribbling. ‘This was not one of your better efforts. It was so awful for us; I can remember every card.’ James looked across and winced as he remembered how carelessly he had played. The fact that he had been on the golf course all afternoon and felt tired was really no excuse.

James opened 1NT and went on to game over Eddie’s 2NT response. Liz led the king of hearts and down went the dummy.

This was the full deal: ▶

The Green Baize Cup *continued*

| | | |
|--------------|------------------|---------------|
| <i>Eddie</i> | | |
| ♠ K 8 5 | | |
| ♥ 8 2 | | |
| ♦ J 10 5 | | |
| ♣ A Q J 3 2 | | |
| <i>Liz</i> | N W E S | <i>Brenda</i> |
| ♠ 9 7 4 | | ♠ J 10 3 2 |
| ♥ K Q J 9 5 | | ♥ 10 6 4 |
| ♦ K 9 3 | | ♦ Q 8 4 |
| ♣ 7 4 | | ♣ K 8 5 |
| <i>James</i> | | |
| ♠ A Q 6 | | |
| ♥ A 7 3 | | |
| ♦ A 7 6 2 | | |
| ♣ 10 9 6 | | |

The five-card club suit came as a pleasant surprise as he took a moment to count his winners. Six top tricks with the near solid clubs good for at least another three tricks. First, what did he make of that ominous looking king of hearts sitting malevolently on the table in front of Liz?

Careless Declarer Play

Dutifully, James held up playing the ace until the third round and then tried the club finesse. When this failed, he was relieved to find East unable to return a heart. He won the diamond return and prepared to take his winners. Suddenly, with a sinking feeling, he realised his fatal error. Without thinking, he had discarded a winning club from dummy on the third round of hearts. The contract finished one down. He looked up in despair only to see one glum and two far from sympathetic faces. ‘Bad luck, partner,’ said a far from convincing Eddie.

Almost in unison, Liz and Brenda commenced to hum a well-known tune ever so softly. ‘That sounds familiar,’ remarked Eddie. ‘It should do,’ said a bemused Liz, ‘it’s James’s theme song, *Bridge over Troubled Water!*’ Muted laughter from other tables receded as they heard a call to order.

The Competition Starts

The event was fully subscribed in next to no time with each pair allocated a team number and an individual starting

time for the morning golf. ‘Would you look at that,’ said a somewhat exasperated Eddie, ‘I’m off in the first group with Dave Jones and old Tim Collins. Dave’s a bit of a bandit and should have a much lower handicap, while poor old Tim rarely remembers how many shots he’s had. Not that I’m saying he does it deliberately, but the truth is we have to have an inquest on just about every hole.’ ‘Well, I’m off second to last,’ commented James, ‘just relax, keep out of the rough and don’t take too many putts. We need to get a reasonable score to carry forward into the afternoon bridge session. You had better go and get ready – you’re off in 20 minutes.’

The First Hole

The first hole was a tricky par 4 with bunkers guarding a slightly raised green. Following a somewhat indifferent tee shot, Eddie managed to land his third shot on the back of the green, about 15 feet from the flag. Dave was slightly closer having played two shots while Tim was just off the putting surface having played four. Tim putted first and managed to get down for six. Eddie played next and holed the putt miraculously. This seemed to upset Dave’s concentration and he was far from pleased when he missed an eight-inch putt for a score of five. ‘Four for Eddie, five for you, Dave and five for me announced Tim in a confident tone. ‘Now just run that backwards, Tim,’ said Eddie in a conciliatory voice!

The Next Six Holes

The game continued in a good humoured and orderly fashion for the next six holes. ‘What do you think would happen if we engaged in this type of repartee at the bridge table?’ joked Eddie. ‘You can almost feel the tension at some duplicate clubs. It is hardly surprising that most play bridge in a social game at home; there you can let off steam occasionally! You know what I mean. You need to make a three-foot putt on the golf course to halve the hole and it misses by a whisker. Do you say *oh, bother* in a quiet tone or something more colourful to describe your

dismay?’

Bridge players are incredibly reserved in comparison with participants at other pastimes. All that pent up emotion. It can hardly be a good thing.’ Dave laughed and joined in the fun, ‘some of those tennis players are quite something. Many of the best players shout and grunt throughout matches to vent their frustration at losing points. What about our chap, Andy Murray, when he came back from the dead against that highly ranked French player in the Wimbledon quarterfinals. His ultimate gesture after winning was to flex his powerful biceps for the nation to see!’

‘Not quite my style,’ remarked Eddie, ‘but what a great match! Now let us imagine a hard-fought evening at the local duplicate club, after which the victors give an almighty roar of triumph and punch the air with clenched fists. What a spectacle that would be! The nearest thing to that I’ve seen is a chastened handshake across the table.’

Lost Ball

‘I think I’ve lost my ball,’ said Dave from the heavy rough at the side of the eighth green. ‘I was sure it went in about here.’ Eddie and Tim came over to join in the search. ‘This might be it,’ shouted Eddie from a clump of tuft grass. Dave came over and confirmed positive identification very carefully. ‘Seeing you do that reminds me of an amusing article concerning the late President Eisenhower,’ continued Eddie, ‘he was a competent bridge player and a golfing enthusiast. Apparently, he had a very novel method of checking his ball. He used a club and rolled his ball over until his mark became visible. If the ball moved into a better lie, well, he *was* the President. One afternoon, his ball settled in the rough. When he tried to roll it over, it lodged against a rock. He immediately asked his caddie what had happened. The caddie replied, ‘Mr President, I am afraid you have over-identified your ball!’

Golf Scores Ready

Eddie finished his match with 29 Stableford points and was soon congratulating James on his very commendable 34. With all the results in, the golf scores were soon up in ▶

The Green Baize Cup continued

the clubhouse. ‘Not too bad,’ said a relieved Eddie, ‘fourth place keeps us in with a chance.’ Liz and Brenda had scored a joint 61 points to put them in fifth place.

Following a very welcome buffet lunch, the afternoon bridge was soon underway. Liz looked up as James and Eddie took their places for the second round. ‘Hello, you two. It is funny we were only just talking about ways to get rid of losers!’ ‘That’s right,’ continued Brenda with an innocent smile, ‘Liz had a couple of losing jacks on the last board, but managed to ditch them both without bloodshed.’


Eddie looked across at his wife and wondered where this quite uncharacteristic banter could come from. It must be something to do with the cards. Perhaps they have a coating that absorbs into the skin to make some people merry or something. He contemplated this thought. Maybe I can market the idea. I can just see the slogan ‘play bridge and get high’ all at the same time. No more temper tantrums when the contract goes down – just a shrug and a friendly smile.

‘Wake up, Eddie; you look like you’ve gone into a trance. You are both going to need your wits about you to stand any chance against us. If you’re still thinking about that 10-foot putt you sank on the eighth green this morning, then that’s not going to help you much.’ ‘Don’t knock it,’ said James coming to the aid of his friend, ‘that putt gained us a couple of valuable points’.

The Bridge Gets Underway

The first deal saw Liz make an overtrick in a pretty-much routine 3NT contract. ‘Good one for us, partner,’ said Brenda as she entered the score. ‘Don’t forget now: overbid for show, overtricks for dough!’ ‘Where did that come from?’ quipped an amused Eddie, thinking about his notorious reputation for making risky bids. ‘Just made it up,’ said Brenda with more than a knowing look.

The next board saw Eddie (West) as declarer in 3NT. Brenda led the jack of hearts and Eddie was soon thanking James for such an impressive dummy. This was the full deal:

| | | |
|---------------|---|----------------|
| <i>Brenda</i> | | |
| ♠ | A Q 5 | |
| ♥ | J 10 9 4 | |
| ♦ | 10 2 | |
| ♣ | J 8 5 2 | |
| <i>Eddie</i> |  | <i>James</i> |
| ♠ | 10 9 6 3 | ♠ J 4 |
| ♥ | K Q 5 | ♥ A 6 2 |
| ♦ | A 9 6 3 | ♦ Q 5 |
| ♣ | K Q | ♣ A 10 9 7 6 3 |
| <i>Liz</i> | | |
| ♠ | K 8 7 2 | |
| ♥ | 8 7 3 | |
| ♦ | K J 8 7 4 | |
| ♣ | 4 | |

‘Home and dry,’ thought Eddie. ‘Three hearts, one diamond and an entry to run the club winners after the king and queen have been played.’ He marked time by giving Brenda a sideways glance. She was peering intently at dummy. ‘Oh, dear,’ reflected Eddie. ‘I’ve seen that look before and it can mean only one thing – trouble – usually for me!’

He remembered fondly that interesting story by the late Roald Dahl called ‘The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar’. Over a long period of years, Henry Sugar had honed his concentration to such an amazing level that he was eventually able to see through the backs of playing cards. He used this skill to take millions from casinos around the world. ‘What wouldn’t I give for that ability right now?’ pondered Eddie.

Bad Breaks?

‘Take particular care if it looks too easy. What if the club break is unkind? If one opponent has all the missing clubs, I am probably going down, but what about a 4-1 break? I might be making a big mistake as I know most people will be trying for the overtrick, but I need only five club tricks for the contract, so I shall play safe. He duly won the first trick in hand with the queen and followed this with the king of clubs. His next move was to overtake his queen of clubs with dummy’s ace. South showed out revealing the 4-1 break. Eddie continued with the club ten taken by Brenda’s jack. The defenders next

cached three rounds of spades, but the contract was now safe with the ace of hearts as an entry to the winning clubs.

‘Well played,’ said Brenda. ‘I thought we might have defeated you on that one.’ ‘Looks like a good score for you,’ continued Liz, ‘you had to commit to the possible bad break right away.’ ‘It must be something to do with his X-ray vision,’ joked a very pleased James.

Ladies’ Golf Club Captain

The next move saw James and Eddie facing the ladies’ golf club captain, Linda Jones. A deceptively demur appearance and friendly smile masked a determination to win, especially if there were men in the firing line!

The first board saw Eddie open a pre-emptive 3♦ vulnerable. Linda promptly doubled and that remained the final contract. Crucially, James held the ace of spades and three diamonds to the queen. The contract just made, much to Linda’s chagrin. Quick to savour the moment, James plucked the traveller from the board. ‘Clear top for us partner – looks like 4♥ makes their way.’

Take-out Double

Linda glared across at her partner, Emily. ‘Didn’t you realise my double was for take-out?’ Emily looked across the table and thought about her quickly diminishing place in the ladies’ A-team. ‘Sorry partner, I thought we might have got them down,’ was all she could say. Open disagreements between partners at the bridge table brings nothing but negative results and the final two boards resulted in one missed game call for Linda and an easy spade game for James.

The Final Round

The boards for the final round arrived at the table along with club secretary, Paul Ling and his partner Mick Wade. ‘Hi guys,’ said Mick in a friendly manner, ‘the lovely Linda doesn’t look too pleased. Now what have you two been up to?’ ‘Entirely self-inflicted with the aid of her partner,’ replied James adopting a mock-serious tone, ‘we’re both pillars of propriety!’

Everyone chuckled and Paul decided the atmosphere was right to tell a quick story. ‘It’s about this chap who goes to the doctor for a check-up. ▶

