



Length Attracts Shortage: The Principle of Vacant Spaces

Other things being equal, there is a 36% chance that a suit will break 3-3, a 28% chance of a 4-1 break (although it feels like more), a 50% chance that a simple finesse will succeed (although it sometimes feels like less) and so on.

The trick is to know which ‘other things’ may not be ‘equal’. Truth be told, they very rarely are.

♠ A 9 8 2
♥ A 6 5
♦ 9 6 3
♣ A 4 2

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

♠ K J 10 7 5
♥ K 8
♦ A 7 4
♣ K 8 5

You are in 4♠, after an uncontested auction, on a club lead from West. You are booked to lose two diamonds and a club and so to succeed, you will need to play the spade suit without loss.

Plonking down the ace-king is clearly best. You will succeed whenever the spades are 2-2 and any time the queen is singleton. (You will also succeed if the spades are 4-0, so long as you guess which hand to start from.)

Of course, circumstances alter cases. Suppose that you hold the same cards but East has opened with a pre-emptive bid of 4♥. Does this change how you should play the spade suit?

You bet it does! Now the best play is to cash the king of spades, intending to finesse West for the queen. The reason for doing so is this: once you know East has a very long heart suit, he rates to be shorter than West in the remaining suits.

Think of it like this – East probably

has eight hearts, and thus five ‘non-hearts’. West probably has no hearts, and so he has thirteen ‘non-hearts’. The queen of spades, being a spade, is a ‘non-heart’. This makes West (who has thirteen such cards) more likely to have it than East (who has only five).

For the first half of the maxim – length attracts shortage – this is as far as we need to go. For the second half – the principle of vacant places – we need to look more closely, counting the cards each defender has played.

Suppose you take the king of clubs, cash the king of spades (all follow), and continue with the jack, on which West plays the remaining low spade. What are the odds if you finesse?

Well... we have seen two of East’s five non-hearts (a club and a spade) leaving him with three ‘vacant spaces’, or unknown cards. We have seen three of West’s thirteen non-hearts (a club and two spades), leaving him with ten. So, at the key moment, the finesse is a ten to three favourite – a 77% chance. That, in a nutshell, is the principle of vacant spaces. (Some would ignore the clubs in the calculation as West had to lead something and East had to follow suit, but this is a small point.)

Sooner or later, you will have to tackle a hand like this next one. Partner puts you into 7♣, and this is what you see:

♠ A 2
♥ K 10
♦ K 10 9 3
♣ A Q 6 5 4

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

♠ K 9
♥ A Q J
♦ A J 6
♣ K J 10 3 2

The duplication in the majors is a trifle unlucky. Had you known, you would have stopped in 6NT. Meanwhile, West leads a heart and it is up to you to find the queen of diamonds. At this point, you have a simple 50-50 guess as to where she is. Can we improve on this?

Maybe we can.

Suppose you draw trumps, East turning up with all three of them. The odds on the diamond finesse have now changed. East has ten ‘non-clubs’ to West’s thirteen, making it a thirteen to ten favourite, or 57%, to play West for the diamond queen. Most finesses start life as 50-50 propositions, but very few of them stay that way.

To pass the time, you decide to cash your remaining spade and heart winners. East surprises you at this point by discarding a spade on the third round of hearts.

Now we know that East began with three clubs, two hearts and two or more spades, leaving him with six vacant spaces, whilst West began with no clubs, six hearts and two or more spades, leaving him with five vacant spaces. The odds in the diamond suit have changed again and East is now a six to five favourite, or 55%, to hold the queen of diamonds. Crossing to the king of diamonds and running the ten is the best play.

Conclusion

The odds that a given thing will happen are not set in stone – on the contrary, during the play of most hands, declarer must confront a changing picture.

The percentages I gave at the start of this article are perfectly correct. They are the chances that a given thing will happen assuming we know nothing about the concealed hands. Once information starts coming in, those odds can change and often do. ■



Gerber – a Convention from Another Time

For this issue's look at conventions and the players who invented them, I want to focus on Gerber. This is the 4♣, asking for aces, convention. Unusually for this series, instead of praising the convention, I am going to try to convince you why tournament players neither use nor recommend it except in no-trump auctions.

Hands with 33 HCP between two hands are very rare. Most of the time, making a slam depends on having a good fit. So let us suppose that the bidding starts 1♠-3♠. In Acol, 3♠ is a limit raise, suggesting about 11 points or 8 losers. The East hand here would be typical:

| | | | | | | |
|---------------|---|------------|---|---|---|------------|
| ♠ A Q 8 6 3 2 | | ♠ K 10 7 4 | | | | |
| ♥ Q 2 | <table border="1" style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle;"><tr><td>N</td></tr><tr><td>W</td></tr><tr><td>S</td></tr><tr><td>E</td></tr></table> | N | W | S | E | ♥ K J 10 6 |
| N | | | | | | |
| W | | | | | | |
| S | | | | | | |
| E | | | | | | |
| ♦ 9 | | ♦ A 8 2 | | | | |
| ♣ A K Q 9 | | ♣ 6 2 | | | | |

The West hand, with only four losers, is unusually good for a one-level opening but certainly possible. Although envisaging a slam, West does not want to ask for aces over 3♠ because there might be two fast heart losers.

The normal continuation is to use bids in new suits below game as cue-bids, showing control of the suit bid and expressing slam interest. Using cue-bids is like using a rapier rather than using the clumsy bludgeon of asking for aces *en masse*. So West, with slam interest, now bids 4♣. This is a cue-bid showing the ace of clubs and inviting a return cue-bid from partner. East shows the ace of diamonds by bidding 4♦ and, rather than sign off with 4♠, West continues with 5♣, another cue bid. This highlights the need for a heart control. East recognises that the king of hearts is invaluable and, trusting partner, leaps to

slam. The complete auction is:

| West | East |
|------|------|
| 1♠ | 3♠ |
| 4♣ | 4♦ |
| 5♣ | 6♣ |

As you can see, unless there is an immediate ruff, the contract is cold. Notice that ace asking at any point by West, whether Gerber or Blackwood, would reveal an ace missing; presumably this would prompt West to stop in 5♠.

Another very useful tool in reaching good slams and avoiding bad ones is the splinter bid. The splinter shows three things at once: support for partner's suit, game values and a shortage (singleton or sometimes a void) in the suit bid. Here is a splinter in action:

| | | | | | | |
|---------------|---|-----------|---|---|---|-----------|
| ♠ A Q 8 6 3 2 | | ♠ K J 7 4 | | | | |
| ♥ K 2 | <table border="1" style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle;"><tr><td>N</td></tr><tr><td>W</td></tr><tr><td>S</td></tr><tr><td>E</td></tr></table> | N | W | S | E | ♥ A J 9 6 |
| N | | | | | | |
| W | | | | | | |
| S | | | | | | |
| E | | | | | | |
| ♦ 9 | | ♦ K 8 4 2 | | | | |
| ♣ A 9 4 3 | | ♣ 2 | | | | |

West opens with 1♠ and the East hand is perfect for a 4♣ splinter bid: four-card spade support, game values (12 HCP and 7 losers) and a singleton club. News of the club shortage and spade support is music to West's ears. Expecting to be able to ruff all his club losers in dummy, West thinks of a slam immediately. He bids 4NT and, when East shows two key cards (the ♠K and the ♥A), bids 6♣. It would be difficult to reach this 25-point slam with confidence unless West knew about East's club shortage.

Modern players the world over just love cue-bids and splinter bids. You can read Bernard Magee's articles about these in the Mr Bridge online library. Go

to www.mrbridge.co.uk/library and click through to the slam bidding articles – or look at BRIDGE issues 72-74 if you still have them.

Use of cue-bids and splinters precludes the use of 4♣ asking for aces (i.e. the Gerber convention). Moreover, you cannot really use Gerber if one or other member of the partnership has bid clubs because then you might need 4♣ as a natural bid. So why is Gerber still widely played by club standard players? It should not be, as it is really a convention from a different time and place. Limit bids were, and are, an Acol idea. In contrast, in the 1950s in America 1♥-3♥ (and 1♠-3♠) were played as forcing to game. Bidding that way solved the problem of responding on a hand like this:

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

Opposite a forcing jump raise to 3♥, opening bidder, knowing of partner's great strength, might well have wished to know about aces. The claimed advantage in these circumstances of using Gerber rather than Blackwood is that when you showed your one ace and this was not enough, opener could sign off in 4♥ rather than 5♥; you never needed to suffer the indignity of going one off in a five-level contract. Note, however, that by playing a double raise in a major as forcing, America had no proper bid available for the invitational hand with four-card support and 10-12 points. You changed the suit and took your chance on opposing intervention.

The limit bid concept is a strong ►

one. By the 1960s, Standard American was moving away from the forcing raise and, as it was swept out of favour and replaced by limit bids, the useful aspects of Gerber went too.

John Gerber was a world-class player from Houston, Texas. Born in 1906, he came to bridge prominence in the 1950s and went on to win over 50 American titles. He was non-playing captain of the American world championship teams three times in the 1960s, but unluckily this period coincided with the ascendancy enjoyed by the famous and all-conquering Italian 'Blue Team'. At each of the three championships, he was embroiled in controversy, at the first two over team tactics when he split up established partnerships and at the third in 1965 at Buenos Aires, when the Americans accused the Britons, Reese and Schapiro, of cheating. Gerber experienced the other side of this in 1977. Non-playing captain of a team leading the American trials, two of his players were accused of cheating and abruptly resigned from the ACBL rather than face an enquiry. There was never any suggestion that Gerber was involved in any way; indeed there was widespread disappointment that he had been let down on what would have been a popular return to the world championship arena.

Gerber died, aged 74, in 1981. His ace-asking convention is really used now only in direct response to no-trump opening bids where raises in no-trumps are 'quantitative'. When it comes to suit auctions though, cue-bidders reach many good slams and Gerber himself would have approved of the cue-bidding approach. ■

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DECLARER PLAY QUIZ



by David Huggett

(Answers on page 45)

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

1.

♠ 6 5 4
♥ 10 9 3
♦ A J 9 2
♣ K Q 3



♠ K Q J 10 7
♥ A 4
♦ K 10 7 3
♣ J 6

3.

♠ A 8 6 5
♥ K 9
♦ K 7 5
♣ 10 9 7 6



♠ K J 10 9 7
♥ J 8 6
♦ 9 2
♣ A K J

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|--------|
| 1NT* | Pass | Pass | 2♣ |
| Pass | 3♣ | Pass | 4♣ |
| End | | | *12-14 |

You are in 4♣ and West leads the ♥K. How do you plan the play?

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| 1♥ | Pass | Pass | 1♠ |
| Pass | 2♥ | Pass | 3♣ |
| Pass | 4♣ | End | |

You are in 4♣ and West leads the ♦Q. How do you plan the play?

2.

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



♠ 6 5
♥ K 5
♦ K 10 7 6
♣ A K J 9 2

4.

♠ A 9 8 6
♥ K 5
♦ J 6 5
♣ Q 10 9 6



♠ Q J 10 7 5
♥ Q J 10
♦ 7 2
♣ A K J

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| | | Pass | 1♣ |
| Pass | 1♠ | Dbl | 2♣ |
| 3♥ | 5♣ | End | |

You are in 5♣ and West leads the ♦Q. How do you plan the play?

You open 1♠ in fourth seat (i.e. after three passes) and end in 4♣. West leads the ♦A. He continues with the ♦K and a third diamond to East's ♦Q. How do you plan the play?



Choose Trumps for Ruffs in the Short Hand

Consider your next call as South on the hand below, playing pairs:

1

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

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

You have a choice of trump suits. Which one do you choose, and why?

You expect that the opponents are going to lead diamonds. Would you prefer to be taking the ruffs with the short trumps or the long ones?

There are two reasons to play in the suit where you will take ruffs with short trumps. Firstly, ruffing in the short trump hand can gain you extra tricks, whereas ruffing in the long hand seldom does. In addition, it helps you retain trump control if they split badly.

On the deal above, both potential trump suits break 4-1. In 4♠, this is enough to hold you to ten tricks when you are forced down to the same number of trumps as West. You will not have time to build your club trick. However, in hearts, you have an easy time. If they force you to ruff a diamond, the ruff will be your extra trick; on any other defence, you can draw trumps, run the spades and set up a club trick.

2

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| | Pass | 1♦ | 1♠ |
| Pass | 3♥ | Pass | ? |

Partner's jump shift, especially as a passed hand, shows primary spade support and a decent five-card heart suit. Again, you have the choice of which major suit game to play in. With a known nine-card fit in spades, it is not likely that trump control will be the issue. Even so, again you should opt for partner's suit. You can see that if you play in 4♠ you are sure to get a diamond lead. If West is short in the suit, you may have a problem ruffing safely on the third round.

By contrast, in 4♥, West is unlikely to be able to overruff your Q-J-10. Indeed, if East has a tenace in diamonds, there may not even be a diamond lead. Here North should make ten tricks in 4♥ on any lead – rejecting the finesse if East leads a spade. 4♠ fails via a trump promotion on the third diamond – if you ruff high, West discards – if you ruff low, West overruffs.

Sometimes, when you have a double fit, you both have shortages. It can then be a problem to decide which contract to play in. In such circumstances, you want, if possible, to ruff the weak suit with short or strong trumps, as above.

Let us turn things around and consider things from the defensive point of view.

Put yourself in the West seat on the hand below. Again you are playing pairs.

3

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| | 1♠ | Pass | 2♥ |
| Pass | 3♥ | Pass | 3♠ |
| Pass | 4♥ | End | |

You hear the opponents bid to 4♥ having found a double fit along the way. Thinking back to what we said earlier, the likelihood is that they will have chosen to play in a suit where ruffs can be taken in the hand with short trumps. In a situation where it looks probable that declarer will look to take ruffs with short trumps, what should you lead?

Of course, you should lead a trump. When your side gains the lead in diamonds, you will be able to continue with a trump and, on this defence, declarer will make only ten tricks.

Should North-South have known to play in spades, where on any 3-2 trump break, eleven tricks look reasonably straightforward? I would not criticise the auction, sometimes bridge is a hard game! At least this time the overtrick only really matters at matchpoints! ■



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- 24 - 6/7 Faroes, Fire & Ice

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- 2 - 4 Marsham Court Gentle / Just Duplicate
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Denham Grove, Uxbridge

JULY cont

- 24 - 26 Denham Grove

AUGUST 2009

- 2 - 13 British Isles Discovery
- 7 - 9 Denham Grove Gentle / Just Duplicate



MV Discovery

- 13 - 26 Baltic Capitals
- 21 - 23 Denham Grove
- 26 - 3/9 Norwegian Fjords 2

SEPTEMBER 2009

- 3 - 10 Riviera Cruise
- 10 - 19 Italian Odyssey
- 11 - 13 The Beach Hotel Rubber/Chicago
- 19 - 1/10 Adriatic & Aegean Treasures

SEPTEMBER cont

- 23 - 25 Marsham Court Gentle / Just Duplicate



Marsham Court, Bournemouth

- 25 - 27 Staverton Park
- 30 - 2/10 Marsham Court Rubber/Chicago

OCTOBER 2009

- 1 - 12 Black Sea Discovery
- 2 - 4 The Beach Hotel
- 9 - 11 The Olde Barn



Wychwood Park, Crewe

OCTOBER cont

- 12 - 26 Black Sea & Aegean Adventure
- 16 - 18 Staverton Park
- 16 - 18 The Beach Hotel
- 16 - 18 The Olde Barn
- 16 - 18 Wychwood Park
- 23 - 25 Wychwood Park
- 30 - 1/11 Marsham Court



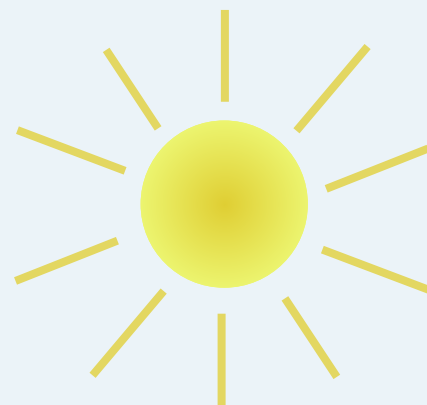
Staverton Park, Daventry

- 30 - 1/11 Staverton Park Gentle / Just Duplicate
- 30 - 1/11 The Olde Barn

NOVEMBER 2009

- 1 - 15 Tunisia Golf an option
- 2 - 14 North African Treasures
- 6 - 8 Blunsdon House

Holidays, Weekends



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

NOVEMBER cont

- 13 – 15 Denham Grove
- 13 – 15 Staverton Park
- 13 – 15 The Olde Barn
- 15 – 29 Tunisia



Port El Kantaoui, Tunisia

- 20 – 22 Wychwood Park
- 27 – 29 Denham Grove

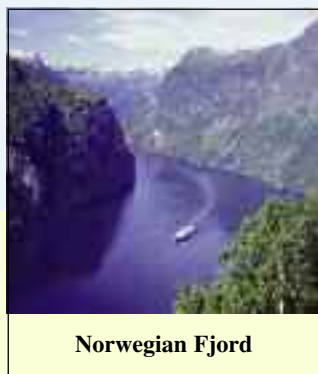


Blunsdon House, Swindon

- 27 – 29 Staverton Park
- 27 – 29 The Olde Barn
- 27 – 29 Wychwood Park
- 28-21/12 Passage to India

DECEMBER 2009

- 4 – 6 Denham Grove
Gentle / Just Duplicate
- 4 – 6 The Beach Hotel
- 11 – 13 The Beach Hotel
Rubber/Chicago
- 19 – 5/1 India and
the East



Norwegian Fjord

- 24 – 27 Denham Grove
CHRISTMAS
- 24 – 27 The Olde Barn
CHRISTMAS
- 27 – 29 Denham Grove
TWIXMAS
- 27 – 29 The Olde Barn
TWIXMAS
- 29 – 31 The Olde Barn
TWIXMAS
- 29 – 1/1 Denham Grove
NEW YEAR
- 29 – 1/1 The Beach Hotel
NEW YEAR

JANUARY 2010

- 1 – 3 The Beach Hotel



St Petersburg

- 1 – 3 The Olde Barn
- 3 – 22 Bangkok,
Bali
and beyond
- 17 – 31 Asian
Capitals
and Vietnam
- 29 – 31 The Beach Hotel
Rubber/Chicago
- 29 – 12/2 Manila,
Borneo
and Brunei



The Beach Hotel, Worthing

FEBRUARY 2010

- 5 – 7 The Beach Hotel
- 10 – 3/3 Malaysia
to Mauritius
- 12 – 14 The Beach Hotel
Rubber/Chicago
- 21 – 7/3 Tunisia

MARCH 2010

- 1 – 17 Indian Ocean
& Southern
Africa
- 7 – 21 Tunisia



The Olde Barn, Marston

- 15 – 1/4 Southern
Africa
& Kenya
- 19 – 21 The Beach Hotel
- 21 – 4/4 Tunisia
- 26 – 28 The Beach Hotel
- 30 – 15/4 Africa &
The Red Sea



Nine Tricks are Easier than Eleven

Almost from the moment that we start to play bridge, we become aware that the minor suits are the poor relations. This is for good reason. The difference between making nine tricks (3NT) and eleven tricks (game in a minor) is much greater than the gap between making nine and ten (game in a major). You know also that if you fail to make exactly eleven, then you have either overbid – or underbid! At matchpoints, even if you make 5♣ or 5♦, any pairs who make ten tricks in 3NT outscore you.

While most of us open one of a major with a five-card suit happily, on values within the no-trump range, we would not open 1♣ or 1♦ on such hands with a five-card minor. From the outset, the emphasis is on playing in no-trumps rather than a minor. Take this hand for example:

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

| | |
|-------------|-------------|
| West | East |
| 1NT | 3NT |

3NT is far from perfect on a spade lead, but it will make any time you do not get a spade lead, any time spades divide 4-4 and often when someone holds ♠A-K-x.

5♦, by contrast, suffers from the indignity of having three top losers no matter what the lead. Note that, if you reverse the red suits (giving East ♥K-Q-J-x-x), you would prefer to play in 4♥, which, barring wild breaks, is virtually laydown. What is more, you would reach 4♥ easily after a 1NT opening: East would show his five-card heart suit with a transfer or by whatever method you employ.

Here is another type of hand that you should treat differently because of the low scoring of the minor suits:

| | | | |
|-------------|------------|--|------------|
| ♠ K 6 | | | ♠ Q 10 8 |
| ♥ A J 7 | | | ♥ 8 5 |
| ♦ K Q 9 5 3 | N W S E | | ♦ A J 8 6 |
| ♣ K 6 3 | | | ♣ A 10 8 5 |

| | |
|-------------|-------------|
| West | East |
| 1♦ | 3♦ |
| 3NT | |

Playing a weak no-trump, West opens 1♦ and, with an eight-loser hand, East, no doubt, raises to 3♦. I imagine that West will – quite rightly – give little thought to bidding anything other than 3NT, which would be unlucky to fail. 5♦ might make, but would be an inferior contract.

Note that, if the players were playing a strong no-trump, then the bidding would just go 1NT-3NT.

As an aside, there is a difference in the meaning of opener's second bid in the following two auctions:

| | | | |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| (a) | | (b) | |
| West | East | West | East |
| 1♥ | 3♥ | 1♦ | 3♦ |
| 3♣ | | 3♣ | |

In auction a), 3♣ is a cue-bid and is the start of an exploration to see if a slam is possible. This is because, when you have a known eight-card fit in a major, you will not play in some other suit. However, in auction b) 3♣ does not mean that opener has first-round control, nor indeed four spades (because partner has denied holding that suit). It merely shows a stopper in the suit and is looking for partner to bid 3NT. (The opener would, of course, be denying a heart stopper or he would have bid 3♥.)

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

| | |
|-------------|-------------|
| West | East |
| 1♦ | 3♦ |
| 3♣ | 3NT |

Auction b) might continue like this. 3♣ shows a spade stopper and denies a heart stopper. Responder, with a heart stopper, continues with 3NT, reaching the best contract. 3NT is laydown, but 5♦ depends on a finesse. Without a heart stopper, East would rebid 4♦.

There is another type of minor-orientated hand where you need to look for nine tricks rather than eleven. Suppose the deal is as follows with you as West:

| | | | |
|---------------|------------|--|-----------|
| ♠ A 3 | | | ♠ 8 4 2 |
| ♥ 8 7 6 | | | ♥ A K 4 |
| ♦ J 7 | N W S E | | ♦ Q 8 5 2 |
| ♣ K Q 9 8 6 5 | | | ♣ A 7 2 |

When your partner (East) opens 1NT (12-14), it would be reasonable to bash 3NT on the basis that the possibility of making a bundle of tricks in clubs will make up for the lack of points. Indeed, on the hand as shown, 3NT is almost impregnable, while 5♣ is hopeless. Of course, West would be happier if he could be sure that his partner 'filled in' the club suit and sophisticated methods can do just that.

On occasion, you should play in five of a minor it is true, but not often and if you gear your bidding towards looking for the no-trump game in these circumstances, you will not go too far wrong. ■



DEFENCE QUIZ

by **Julian Pottage**

(Answers on page 47)

You are East in the defensive positions below. It is your turn to play.

1. ♠ Q J 9
♥ K Q 4
♦ A J 10 2
♣ 9 3 2



♠ K 7 3
♥ A 6
♦ 9 8 4 3
♣ K 8 7 4

West North East South
1NT
Pass 3NT End

Partner leads the ♥J. You capture the ♥K with the ♥A and return the suit, driving out dummy's ♥Q. Declarer calls for the ♠Q. Do you cover? If not, do you cover the ♠J on the next round?

2. ♠ 9 6 5 4
♥ A K J 8
♦ Q 4
♣ J 10 2



♠ K 8 7 2
♥ Q 4 2
♦ J 6 5
♣ Q 9 4

West North East South
1NT
Pass 2♣ Pass 2♦
Pass 2NT Pass 3NT
End

Partner leads the ♦7. Dummy wins with the ♦Q and leads the ♠J. When do you play your ♠Q?

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



♠ 8 3 2
♥ K 6 3
♦ J 8 5 4
♣ A Q 4

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

Partner leads the ♦2: ♦3, ♦8, ♦A. Declarer cashes the ♠A, crosses to the ♠K (West discards the ♥10) and calls for the ♣J. Which club do you play?

4. ♠ A Q 2
♥ Q 4
♦ Q J 10 9 8 3
♣ A K



♠ 9 8 4 3
♥ A 8 3
♦ K 7
♣ Q 10 4 2

West North East South
1♦ Pass 1NT
Pass 3NT End

Partner leads the ♥6: ♥4, ♥A, ♥2. You return the ♥8: ♥10, ♥5, ♥Q. Dummy leads the ♦Q. Do you cover?

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Albert Who?

by Dick Atkinson

My uncle, Baron von Münchhausen, was a lightning analyst at the table. At 103, he is very frail now, but he recalled this deal, which he played against a promising young British player back in the thirties or forties, for me spot perfect. It was high stakes rubber bridge with fixed pairs – his favourite form of the game – playing with his favourite partner, le Marquis de Sade. The young opponent was an adherent of the then new-fangled Acol system, which he had further amended by the addition of a gadget of his own: an opening bid of 2♦ was the artificial Game Force, which meant that 2♣ could be used to show an Acol Two in any suit – even clubs – while 2♥ and 2♠ became ‘Weak Twos’ (as pioneered by the ‘Aces’, a team of brash Americans).

‘Well, it’s very clever in theory,’ Uncle Leopold commented, ‘but mark my words, it will all end in tears . . . Camille, if that 2♦ or 2♣ crops up, double if you have values and two or three suits, same as over INT.’

As it happened, it was the young man’s deal (as West in the layout) and, perhaps inevitably, he opened 2♣. De Sade doubled and East passed. My uncle had:

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

Presumably the opener had an Acol 2♥, which should show at least three quick tricks and about eight or nine playing tricks. Give de Sade opening values and that left very little for East. ‘4♠.’ After all, if de Sade turned up with a two-suiter in the minors, say, 5♦ or 5♣ should be playable. 4♠ was doubled, North and East passed, and Uncle Leo redoubled, as he generally does.

As expected, the ace of hearts was led (East contributing the queen), and dummy turned up, surprisingly, with:

♠ Void
♥ 8 6 5 4 3 2
♦ A Q 7
♣ A Q 7 3

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

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

Unfortunately, it had not been quite so obvious to him that West had a 2♠ opener! Declarer ruffed and tried the five of clubs, which went to the jack, queen and ten. After another heart ruff, East following low but West producing the king, came the five of diamonds to the jack, queen and ten . . . That was the point at which Uncle Leo tabled his cards, announcing: ‘Conceding the obvious three tricks. 530 and 700 for the rubber.’ The young conventioneer looked a little shaken, apparently, and asked the Baron to explain his claim.

‘Certainly, if it is really necessary. The play so far marks you with three doubletons. Of course, you have an Acol Two Bid in *spades*. An ace-king and two king-knaves adds up to three playing tricks, so your remaining five tricks must be ♠K-J-9-7-5-4-3, a suit with two losers normally. I take my minor suit aces, then lead anything but trumps. You must ruff, of course, and play back trumps into my tenace. I repeat the process twice more: an

elementary triple loser-on-loser throw-in. Pretty well unique, wouldn’t you think, to make game in a suit where your left-hand opponent has opened with a strong two bid? I did say that gadget would get you into trouble! Such a nice hand, too. Nothing but honours and trumps and yet you score only three spot cards . . .’ The full deal was:

♠ Void
♥ 8 6 5 4 3 2
♦ A Q 7
♣ A Q 7 3

| | | |
|-----------------|---|----------------|
| ♠ K J 9 7 5 4 3 | | ♠ Void |
| ♥ A K | N | ♥ Q J 10 9 7 |
| ♦ K J | W | ♦ 10 9 8 4 |
| ♣ K J | S | ♣ 10 9 8 4 |
| | E | |
| | | ♠ A Q 10 8 6 2 |
| | | ♥ Void |
| | | ♦ 6 5 3 2 |
| | | ♣ 6 5 2 |

When the Baron recounted the tale, I could not help exclaiming at such a piece of outrageous good fortune: ‘Since you could never have reached the game if West had opened with a natural Acol Two in spades.’

‘On the contrary,’ he snapped, ‘since the contract is unmakeable without a horrible trump break, it should, in principle, have been easier to bid.’ My uncle had smiled reminiscently: ‘Damned if I can remember the fellow’s name. Benjamin Albert? Something like that? I wonder if he stuck at the game.’ ■

Previously published in BRIDGE 46.
Reprinted to satisfy popular demand.



Passed Hand Bidding is a bit Different

Q I picked up a Yarborough two hands in a row. In fact, the second hand was eight high. What are the odds on this?

Colin McKerrow, Wimbledon.

A The chance of a single Yarborough is 1 in 1,828. (If you are mathematically minded, this is 32 choose 13 divided by 52 choose 13.) The chance of getting two Yarboroughs in a row is 1 in 3,341,737. The chance of a single hand with no card higher than eight is 1 in 16,959, so the chance of a 9-high hand followed by an 8-high hand is 1 in 31,003,326.

If you find the subject of Yarboroughs of interest, you might like to know that a book has just come out set in the fictional Yarborough prison entitled *Bridge Behind Bars*. The inmates get their fair share (if not more) of Yarboroughs!



Q Is a 2♠ response with 11 points to 1NT (12-14 points) a recognised convention and, if so, what is its name?

Rita Dawson by email.

A Yes, using a 2♠ response to a 1NT opening as a range

enquiry is quite common. I am afraid I do not know of any name other than 'range enquiry'. By the way, the best way to play this 2♠ response is as either game invitational or slam invitational. After opener rebids 2NT (minimum) or 3♣ (maximum) any action other than pass or 3NT, respectively, shows the hand with slam interest. This is a good way to find a 4-4 fit, perhaps in a minor, which may make the difference between 11 tricks and 12 if the partnership has 31-33 HCP.



Q What do you do in response to 1NT if you are playing transfers and want to make a weak take out into diamonds?

John Morley by email.

A If you play that 2♦ is a transfer (to 2♥) then you cannot play in 2♦ unless you have a three-suited hand short in clubs (when you use Stayman intending to pass any opener's rebid). It is usual to have a way to sign off in 3♦. One option is to play that 2♠ (no longer needed as a natural bid) shows a weak hand with a long minor. After responder

bids 2♠, opener has to bid 3♣. Responder then passes with a weak hand and long clubs or bids 3♦ with a weak hand and a long diamond suit.

To justify playing in 3♦ rather than 1NT, responder normally needs either six diamonds and a singleton or seven diamonds. With a very weak hand, when you are non-vulnerable, you might use the 2♠ bid with slightly less shape to obstruct the opponents.



Q What do you think of my bidding (West) on this hand at my local club?

♠ A 10 9 6 3
♥ 7
♦ J 10 6 5 3
♣ Q 7

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| Pass | Pass | 1♦ | Pass |
| 1♠ | Pass | 2♠ | Pass |
| 4♦ | Pass | 5♦ | End |

Isaac Nahumy, Orpington.

A Since you had already passed, you could have made a special response to 1♦. This is 2♠, a fit-showing jump. It

cannot be a normal jump shift or you would not have passed at your first turn. 2♠ shows five spades and a raise to at least 3♦. While you might have more high cards for the bid, the fifth diamond (the bid promises only four) makes up for that. At teams or rubber, you would want to play in spades rather than diamonds because you need ten tricks for game in spades but eleven for game in diamonds. At matchpoints, you have the added reason that spades scores more. Once partner raises spades, you should not consider playing in diamonds on this hand.



Q East opens 1NT (weak) and South overcalls 2NT. How should North interpret this?

Charles Cane, Bournemouth.

A The 2NT overcall used to show a powerful, shapely hand, unsuitable for a penalty double, usually two suited. These days, most play it as a normal strength overcall with the minors, just like an unusual 2NT if East had opened 1♥ or 1♠. 2NT cannot mean a strong balanced hand, as South would double with that. ▶

Q What should you respond to 1♣ with this? At the table 1♦ was bid.

♠ A J 8 5 4
♥ 8
♦ Q J 7 6
♣ J 8 5

David Nicholls, Conwy.

A When responding to an opening bid, sometimes you bid a 4-card major in preference to a 5-card minor. This is partly because majors are more important and partly because you are more likely to be able to bid the major at the one level.

You should never do it the other way around. With a 5-card major, responder should always show that rather than the 4-card minor. 1♠ is the correct bid.

♣♦♥♠

Q At pairs, what should be the difference in tactics when both sides are vulnerable?

John Moore, Woolpit, Suffolk.

A Playing matchpoint pairs, when both sides are vulnerable (also referred to as game all), neither side wants to go two down (or one down doubled) on a part-score deal because a score of -200 will be worse than a part score.

Both sides tend to be more cautious than at other vulnerabilities. If your opponents are trying to play the hand, you will be more inclined to let them do so and to double more often.

If the limit on the deal is 1NT or two of a minor, in which case the score for declaring is 90, nobody wants to go down at all because a score of just -100 for one down, undoubled is worse. This again is a time for caution.

♣♦♥♠

Q My RHO opens 1♠ and I hold this rock crusher:

♠ 3
♥ A K Q
♦ A K 10 3
♣ K Q 9 3 2

What should I call?

Mrs Celia Osman, Ascot, Berks (similar from David Donnison, Cumbria).

A Double, for takeout, is fine. There is no upper limit on the strength for a takeout double. Whatever partner does (other than leave the double in for penalties), you will take further action on the next round.

♣♦♥♠

Q North opened 1♣ and East held the following hand:

♠ K J 9 7 5
♥ K J 10 8 7 6
♦ 4
♣ 3

East doubled for takeout, thinking that he could retreat to 1♥ if West bid 1♦. What do you think?

David Puttick, by email (similar from Rose Smith).

A With only 8 HCP, a take-out double is not a good idea. Partner may well

take you too high on a misfitting hand or misjudge a competitive auction.

If East-West play Michaels cue bids, which very many duplicate players do, this hand is ideal. A Michaels cue bid of 2♣ (2♦ if they open 1♦) shows at least 5-5 in the majors. With two good suits, you do not need a great deal of strength for this bid. If you do not play Michaels, a simple 1♥ is best.

♣♦♥♠

Q I opened 1♠ and after partner responded 2♦, went 2♥. We missed a game as my partner, who had nine points, thought that I had a minimum opening and passed. I had:

♠ K Q 10 6 3 2
♥ A K 10 5
♦ A
♣ 6 2

Martin Epstein, by email.

A If responder makes a two-over-one response and opener rebids in a new suit, it should be forcing. 2♥ is therefore fine. Your partner should not have passed it.

With your hand, the likely games are 4♠, 3NT and 4♥ but you cannot tell which after the 2♦ response. Even a slam is not far off if partner has, for example, the black aces and the king of diamonds. This is why you need to be able to take things slowly.

♣♦♥♠

Q East opens 1NT. South doubles. West passes. North has four points. How should North interpret the double and what should he do?

Charles Cane by email (similar from B Hinson and Viv Tremeer).

A Unlike a double of one of a suit, a double of 1NT is for penalties. It suggests at least a good 15 points and almost any shape. As the double is for penalties, North will usually pass.

Only with a weak hand (0-4 points) and a five-card or longer suit does North normally remove the double, fearing that 1NT doubled might make. With a weak hand but no five-card or longer suit, it tends to be best to pass: if South does not have enough to defeat 1NT almost single-handed, you would probably be in trouble at the two level anyway.

♣♦♥♠

Q South opened 1NT and all passed. The critical suit was hearts:

♥ 7 4
♥ Q 10 6 3 2 N
 W ♥ A J 8
 S
♥ K 9 5

At the table West led the ten (strong ten leads), East played the eight and the king won. How should the first trick have gone?
Jim Greer, Streatham.

A West should not lead the ten from Q-10-6-3-2. Playing strong ten leads or standard leads, to lead the ten you need three high cards, e.g. Q-10-9-x-x. East's play is also dubious. If West had K-10-9-x-x, ducking would give declarer an undeserved trick with the queen. Correct is for West to lead the three – East should play the ace and return the jack. ▶

Q South opens 1NT. West and North pass. East doubles (for penalties). Should South bid again?

Esther Crossley, Tibberton, Worcs.

A In this auction, North knows more about South's hand than vice versa. Any rescue should usually come from North. Some play that a redouble shows a five-card suit somewhere, though that would not be standard. If South has a bare minimum with a five-card suit, there is a case for removing the double – again such an action would be taking a view.



Q How do you respond if partner opens 1♥ and you have a fit with partner and only six losers?

Glen Terrell, Texas.

A If you have four-card support and (at least) game-going values, then you would start with whatever your system bid is to show a game-forcing raise. These days, more and more people are playing that 2NT is the way to show a game-forcing raise (to bid 2NT naturally you could start by bidding a new suit). Having set a game-forcing sequence at such a low level, you have plenty of room to find out whether one or both members of the partnership have extra values and whether the hands fit well. Opinions vary on the exact meaning of opener's rebids over 2NT; typically they would be something like this:

3♣/3♦/3♠ singleton (or void) in the suit bid (like a splinter).

3♥ waiting (any hand that does not fit into the other descriptions).

3NT extra values but balanced.

4♣/4♦ good second suit

4♥ minimum no singleton or void (possibly good trumps).

If you do not play either 2NT or 3NT as a game-forcing raise and you have the wrong shape for a splinter bid, then you have more of a problem. You would have to start with a new suit and aim to support partner strongly on the next round (delayed game raise).



Q My partner and I had the following sequence.

| Me | Partner |
|----|---------|
| | 1♣ |
| 1♦ | 2♣ |
| 2♥ | 2NT |

How do I know what points I need to raise to 3NT? He had 12 HCP and I had 10. Also, what would 2♠ from him have meant?

J Bardun by email.

A Partner's 2♣, a simple repeat of the suit at the two level, is a minimum rebid, showing at most 15 HCP (indeed, usually 14 maximum). In traditional Acol, your responder's reverse indicates at least 11 HCP, forcing for one round but not to game.

If partner has a spade stopper and wants to play in game facing 11 points, he should jump to 3NT. His 2NT is not forcing and suggests about 11 HCP up to a poor 13; his actual 12 HCP sounds spot on for the bid.

On this auction, if partner had bid 2♠ over 2♥, that would suggest a half stopper in spades (J-x-x or Q-x). He

can hardly have a full stopper (or he would bid no-trumps himself). He cannot bid it without any help in spades because your 2♥ has already highlighted the spade weakness.



Q After opening 1♣ and getting a jump shift response of 2♠, what is the best rebid?

♠ 5
♥ A J 9
♦ K Q 10 5
♣ K 10 9 6 5

Graeme Knox by email.

A On most hands, you just rebid what you would have rebid over a simple response, one level higher. I would rebid 3♣. You can play that a 2NT rebid includes this hand, though I would not try it out undiscussed. Partner might think you have a doubleton spade and a hand too good for a 12-14 1NT – wrong on both counts! A reverse to 3♦ would not be a good idea – that overstates your strength and makes it harder for partner to agree clubs.



Q What are your views on opening 1NT (12-14) with two doubletons?

Stephen Lamley, Lancaster.

A Usually you need a balanced hand to open 1NT. A hand with two doubletons counts as semi-balanced and does not qualify. As with many rules, there are exceptions. With strong doubletons and a five-card suit that ranks below the four-card suit (especially if it is just below), 1NT can be best. On

this hand, I open 1NT:

♠ A Q
♥ J 9 6 5
♦ K 8 5 4 2
♣ K 9



Q I have suffered several penalties recently after opening 1NT. In one case, I had 13 points with a 2-3-3-5 shape and went three down doubled facing a flat four count.

Richard Halsey, Selsdon, Surrey.

A A disadvantage of playing the weak no-trump is that, from time to time, partner has rather less than a fair share of the missing values and you go several down. However, most of the time, this is not the case and the weak no-trump works well. It makes it difficult for the opponents to come in (as they cannot bid at the one level) as well as giving a good picture of both the shape and strength of your hand to your partner. I, and most of the people involved with BRIDGE, play a weak no-trump, believing the upsides outweigh the downsides.

As to running from 1NT doubled, the onus is usually on responder to decide whether to take it out. Responder knows so much more about opener's hand than vice versa. That said, as opener you can sometimes take a view and run to a five-card suit if you have one. This is especially so if the double was in second seat and you are playing a redouble to play. In this case, you know from partner's failure to redouble that you will not get a great dummy in 1NT doubled. ▶

Ask Julian continued

Q Partner opens 1♠ and the next hand passes.

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

What is the best response on this tricky hand?
Cliff Brown, High Wycombe.

A I would bid 2♣, which is right on values. If partner gets excited about playing in clubs, you can always go back to spades at the same level.

The alternatives have equal or greater flaws (too many points and controls for 1NT or 2♠, too little shape for 2♥ or 3♠).



Q I (South) dealt and opened 1NT. West passed, North bid 2♥ (weak takeout) and East doubled. How should I interpret East's double, and what do you think of redouble from me?

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

Ken Wicks, Morden, Surrey.

A Since 2♥ was natural, East's double should be for takeout, suggesting opening values, a shortage in hearts and often four spades.

When the doubler's partner has not bid anything, a double of any natural suit bid below game is for takeout and quite normal.

Assuming the double is for takeout, playing that a redouble shows heart support and a willingness to compete to the three level seems reasonable. It cannot be an SOS redouble because your 1NT opening promised tolerance for all suits. Nor can it be showing a desire to penalise the opponents because your 1NT opening limited your values and partner has not promised any strength.

Whether it is so wise to redouble, if the opponents do not know what the double means, is another matter. Maybe West was about to let your partner play in 2♥ doubled. Then again, since redoubles do not come up very often, they may be even more likely to have a misunderstanding if you throw in a redouble.



Q We play weak no-trump but hear players are starting to use a strong 16-18 1NT. What do you do with 12-14 if you play this?
Roy South, Otford, Kent.

A The strong no-trump is becoming a bit more popular, though with the range 15-17. 16-18 is the old strong no-trump range, which you will rarely encounter these days. With a flat 12-14 playing a strong no-trump, you aim to rebid 1NT rather than open it. The way to be sure you can rebid 1NT is by opening 1♣ because then any change of suit response by partner will be at the one level. ■

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30 September-2 October (Wed-Fri)

Marsham Court £199

Full-board – No Single Supplement

Please note there are no seminars or set hands on these weekends



Marsham Court

East Cliff, Bournemouth, BH1 3AB

The Beach Hotel

Worthing, BN11 3QJ

BOOKING FORM

Please book me for places, Single Double Twin
for the Rubber/Chicago weekend(s) of

.....

Mr/Mrs/Miss

Address.....

.....

Postcode

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Special requirements (these cannot be guaranteed)

.....

Please send a non-returnable deposit of £50 per person per place by cheque, payable to Mr Bridge. An invoice for the balance 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.

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

☎ 01483 489961 Fax 01483 797302

e-mail: jessica@mrbridge.co.uk

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*Gentle/Just Duplicate

4-6 December £199

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Eight executive rooms: £50 supplement per event. Half the bedrooms are on the ground floor. Please advise if you require a ground-floor room.

*Please note, there are no seminars or set hands on these weekends.

- ◆ Full-board Friday to Sunday
- ◆ No single supplement
- ◆ Use of swimming pool and fitness suite
- ◆ All rooms with en-suite facilities
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Please send a non-returnable deposit of £50 per person per place by cheque, payable to Mr Bridge. An invoice for the balance 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. *£50 supplement per room.

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Two Handed Bridge II

by George Hutter



Here are two more ideas. As before, normal bridge rules apply as far as they can.

Draw Bridge

Deal 13 cards to each player. Place the remaining 26 face down in a pile to form a stock. Non-dealer leads; you play at this point without trumps and without the normal bridge requirement to follow suit. The winner of each trick in this initial phase puts it face down to one side, as it has no part to play in the rest of the game or the scoring. He then draws the top card of the stock to add to his hand before leading. His opponent then draws the next card from the stock-pile before playing.

Once the last card has gone from the stock, the players bid and play their last 13 cards as at normal bridge and score accordingly. Variant: before leading to each trick, the leader exposes the top card of the stock so that each player may gauge whether or not he wishes to win the trick. The loser of a trick draws an unknown card. This version improves the strategy of the game considerably.

Although the initial phase has features foreign to a bridge player (no bidding, no need to follow suit and no scoring), the method is quite popular. In phase one, you will want to collect high cards and often a long suit. If you have a good memory, you will know which cards your opponent has for the second, main phase. Rather than trying to memorise every card from the initial phase, you might just count points (easy as not many high cards will go) and suits

(perhaps spades and your longest suit if you cannot manage counting three suits). When it comes to bidding, you will want to bid a suit in which you have more cards, ideally far more cards than does your opponent. Each extra trump you have will be worth a trick, which also helps you decide how high to bid.

Single Dummy

Deal four hands of 13 cards including two dummies. After the deal, you turn one dummy face up. The players then make bids as at normal bridge. Bidding over, the declarer announces whether he will play with the exposed dummy or take his chance with the concealed one. Then you turn up the concealed dummy and, if necessary, adjust the position of the dummies so that each player faces his own dummy. Play proceeds as at Double Dummy: each player plays alternately from his own hand and from his dummy's.

In practice, the players will decide during the bidding which dummy they would rather have. If it is stronger than average or if it is about average but fits their hand, they will bid with it. Both players might want to bid the same suit if the exposed dummy is strong or has a long suit. This can make it an advantage to deal and hence bid first – if both players fancy their chances of making 4♠ facing the exposed dummy, the best the second player may be able to do is to sacrifice in 5♠ over opener's 4♠.

Likewise, if the exposed dummy is a flat 17-count, whoever bids first may well open 3NT. ■