

Australian Bridge

NOVICE EDITION

\$25,000 in cash and prizes

8-19 January 2020

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for entry details



Canberra

Summer Festival
of Bridge

In this month's issue:

- Top results from the Australia-Wide Restricted Pairs
- Counting the hand with Joan Butts and Larry Cohen
- The mathematics of vulnerability when competing
- Kantar on playing the card you are known to hold

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From the Editor

As another year draws to a close (the sixth year in the life of this magazine) we are once again heading into the busy period in the Australian event calendar. The number of events on offer for novice players is increasing every year, and as usual I encourage all of you to get out and try some of these events if you haven't already.

The season begins with the Summer Festival in Canberra in mid-January, followed by the Gold Coast Congress in Broadbeach in late February. Both festivals contain a large number of events that are designed so that you'll play mostly against people who have the same level of experience as you. The Gold Coast event, in particular, has an unmatched range of events aimed at Novice players (see the timetable on this page). If you hope to take part in a national event one day, there is no better place to start.

You can find full details about the Summer Festival at this link, and full details about the Gold Coast event at this link.

Thank you to all the readers who have supported this magazine over the past six years. If you are enjoying the magazine, please consider passing the word on to your friends.

Brad Coles



GOLD COAST CONGRESS FOR ROOKIE TO NOVICE PLAYERS

We will have helpful staff available to assist Rookie and 0-50 mp Players one hour prior event starting and for the Novice Players – half an hour prior to event starting.

ROOKIE PAIRS – 0-10 masterpoints

Sunday 23rd Feb, 10:30 am (minimum 24 boards) finish approx. 2:15 pm
Thursday 27th Feb, 10:30 pm (min 24 boards) finish approx. 2:15 pm
(2 separate events) \$50 per pair, per event

0-50 MASTERPOINT PAIRS

Tuesday 25th Feb 10:30am (min 24 boards) finish approx. 2:15pm
Wed 26th Feb, 2 session event 10:30am & 3pm finish 6:30 pm approx. (must play both sessions)
Thur 27th Feb, 2 session event 10:30 am & 3pm finish 6:30 pm approx. (must play both sessions)
\$50 per pair for Tuesday and \$90.00 per pair for Wednesday and Thursday

Small tea break will be held during sessions of 0-50 and 0-10 masterpoint sessions

FRIDAY NOVICE PAIRS – 0-100 masterpoints

Friday 28th Feb, 10am & 2pm (2 sessions) finish approx. 5:15 pm
\$150 per pair (\$130 if prepaid by 10/2)

NOVICE PAIRS CHAMPIONSHIP – 0-100 masterpoints

5 sessions must play all
Sat 22nd Feb, 10:30 am & 3:00 pm finish approx. 6:15pm
Sun 23rd Feb, 10:30 am & 3:00 pm finish approx. 6:15pm
Mon 24th Feb, 1:30 pm finish approx. 5:00 pm
\$310 PER PAIR (\$290 if prepaid by 10/2)

NOVICE TEAMS – 0-100 masterpoints - 12 matches

Tue 25th Feb, 10:30am & 3pm (4 matches) finish 6:30 pm approx.
Wed 26th Feb, 10:30am & 3pm (4 matches) finish 6:30 pm approx.
Thu 27th Feb, 10:30am & 3pm (4 matches) finish 6:30 pm approx.
Fri 28th Feb – 4 x 12 board stanzas)

THIS MONTH'S CARD PLAY PROBLEMS

Missing four to the queen

You are South, declarer in 4♥.

♠ 10 7 6 2
♥ K 9 6 5
♦ A 5
♣ A 8 6

♦K

♠ K J 3
♥ A J 8 3 2
♦ 10 9 7
♣ 10 7

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
3♦	dbl	pass	4♥
all pass			

West leads the ♦K, East following with the four.

The heart suit is very similar to the one that appeared in this spot last month, but this time the circumstances are a bit different. Plan the play.

Answer on page 5

Marked finesse

You are South, declarer in 6♠.

♠ A K Q 9
♥ 4
♦ A K Q J 10 9 8
♣ 2

♣10

♠ 10 5 4 2
♥ A 7 6 5
♦ 7
♣ Q 5 4 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♥	pass
pass	dbl	2♣	2♠
pass	4NT	pass	5♦
pass	6♠	all pass	

West leads a club to East's ♣K, and East switches to the ♥K. You win the ♥A and cash two top spades. East plays the ♠7 on the first round, and discards on the next. What is your plan?

Answer on page 9

Setting up a long suit

You are South, declarer in 3NT.

♠ A 6 3 2
♥ A K 9 7
♦ A 10 9 7
♣ 5

♦K

♠ K 10 8
♥ 6 2
♦ K 5
♣ A J 10 7 6 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♥	pass	2♣
pass	2♦	pass	3NT
all pass			

With a slightly better club suit than last month, you bid game outright instead of inviting with 2NT. Again, the lead of the ♥Q is won in dummy. This time, when you lead the ♣5, East plays the ♣2. How do you play?

Answer on page 14

PUZZLE PAGE

Email your answers to
puzzles@australianbridge.com



The answers to these three problems will appear in the March issue.

Try the problems for yourself now, and email your answers to us at

puzzles@australianbridge.com

The answers to last month's problems appear in various articles in this issue, on pages 6, 17 and 18.

Bidding forum

With EW vulnerable, Matchpoints, you hold as South:

♠ Q 9 2 ♥ Q 9 4 3 ♦ 10 9 ♣ 10 7 5 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♦	pass	pass
2♥	dbl	1♥	pass
		pass	?

Will you pass your partner's takeout double? If not, which suit should you bid?

Send your call to puzzles@australianbridge.com, along with an explanation of why you made that choice.

It's Your Lead with Ron Klinger

1. Pairs, West deals, both vulnerable

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♣ ¹	pass	1♠
pass	2♠	pass	3♦ ²
pass	4♠	all pass	

1. 2+ clubs.

2. Long-suit trial.

What would you lead as West from:

♠ 8 7 ♥ A 9 6 3 ♦ 10 9 3 ♣ K J 10 5

2. Teams, West deals, nil vulnerable

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	pass	pass	1NT ¹
pass	2♣ ²	pass	2♠
pass	3♠	pass	4♠
all pass			

1. 15-18.

2. Simple Stayman.

What would you lead as West from:

♠ A Q 9 ♥ Q 10 4 ♦ A 7 6 5 3 ♣ J 5

Send your choices to puzzles@australianbridge.com along with an explanation of why you made those leads.

We'll tell you what leads Ron Klinger recommends in the March issue. See page 17 for last month's answers.

Card Play Problem

You are South, declarer in 3NT.

♠ K Q 5
 ♥ 8 6 3
 ♦ K Q J 10 3
 ♣ 8 5

♠ A 7 6 3 2
 ♥ A K 5
 ♦ 6 2
 ♣ A J 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	3NT	all pass	1NT

West leads the ♣K. Plan the play.

See page 6 for last month's answer.

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Bidding under pressure

The best way to deal with a preemptive opponent

By **BRAD COLES**, CANBERRA

THE annual Australia-Wide Restricted Pairs was held in over 60 clubs in the week of 25-31 October. This year's champions were Hans Haan and Jane Stokes from Gawler (pictured top right). They were followed closely by Sonja Ramsund and Debra Peters of Malanda a few matchpoints behind.

The top pair under 50 MP was Jan Styles and Barbie Kelsall of Wagga Wagga (pictured below).



Dawn Benes and Geoff Saxby from the Arana Bridge Club did very well on Board 32 from the event. Dawn held ♠ 6 4 3 2 ♥ 9 3 2 ♦ – ♣ A K J 10 9 4 and heard her right-hand opponent open 3♦. Dawn appreciated the true value of her 8-count, with a void in the opponent's suit and support for all of the unbid suits, so she made a takeout double of 3♦. Her partner, Geoff, held

♠ A K J 9 ♥ A 7 ♦ J 8 4 ♣ 8 6 5 2

Geoff had an easy 4♠ bid, and made 13 tricks after ruffing the ♦K opening lead and finessing the preempter's partner for the ♠Q. Not a bad result, with just 21 HCP between the two hands.

The deal is surprisingly similar to a deal from the Australia-Wide Open Pairs just two months earlier. In that event, South Canberra pair John Niven and Cathy Nichols received a prize for bidding and making game on Board 20:

Board 20 ♠ 10 7 6 2

W/All ♥ K 9 6 5

♦ A 5

♣ A 8 6

♠ 9 5 4

♥ 10

♦ K Q J 8 6 3 2

♣ 9 2

♠ K J 3

♥ A J 8 3 2

♦ 10 9 7

♣ 10 7

♠ A Q 8

♥ Q 7 4

♦ 4

♣ K Q J 5 4 3

On this deal, North has a different kind of hand from the one Dawn held in the Restricted Pairs, but it too is a brave takeout double when West opens 3♦.



2019 winners Hans Haan and Jane Stokes, being presented with their prizes at the Gawler Bridge Club

John did double, and Cathy valued the South hand brilliantly to jump straight to 4♥. The game needed a bit of work, with ♥Q and ♠AQ missing, but all three finesses were a good bet after West had shown a weak hand with long diamonds. Holding ♦KQJ8632, West is very likely to have a singleton heart, and unlikely to have the ♠AQ. Cathy won the ♦A at trick one, cashed the ♥K, successfully finessed the ♥J, and cashed the ♥A. The ♣A provided an entry to play a spade to the ♠J, and eventually a diamond ruff provided an entry for a spade to the ♠K. She just lost the ♦Q, ♣K and ♠A.

That deal, like all the other deals in this year's Open Pairs, was originally played in the 2014 NOT. In that event, Cathy and John's actions were exactly duplicated by Michael Whibley and Liam Milne, who spend a lot of time preempting their opponents, and know exactly what to do when they themselves are the victims of a preempt.

Thank you to all the club organisers who continue to make our Australia-Wide events so successful. Thanks also to bridgegear.com and penline.com.au for their assistance with the prizes. ♦♦



7th placed Rebecca Knight and Naureen Gearon from the Dalby Bridge Club



19th placed Patricia Garner and Susan Wright in their finery for Mackay's Melbourne Cup Day celebration



23rd placed Lis Moller and Thomas Karsai from the Easts Bridge Club in Sydney



The ruffing finesse

Two ways to capture a king

By **PAT O'CONNOR**, SYDNEY

You are South, declarer in 6♠.

♠ K Q 5
♥ K 10 5
♦ A Q J 10 3
♣ 5 3

♠ A J 6 4 3 2
♥ A J 3 2
♦ 4
♣ A 8

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♠
pass	2♦	pass	3♠
pass	4NT	pass	5♣
pass	6♠	all pass	

After an enthusiastic auction you land in 6♠. North's 4NT bid was Roman Key-card Blackwood for spades. South's 5♣ response showed zero or three keycards. West leads the ♣K. Plan the play.

Analysis

You have a club loser and two heart losers.

You could take the diamond finesse and if it succeeds, discard your losing club on the ♦A, or you could take some other finesse.

What is the best way to proceed?

Solution

♠ K Q 5
♥ K 10 5
♦ A Q J 10 3
♣ 5 3

♠ 8
♥ Q 7 4
♦ 9 8 7
♣ K Q J 7 4 2

♠ 10 9 7
♥ 9 8 6
♦ K 6 5 2
♣ 10 9 6

♠ A J 6 4 3 2
♥ A J 3 2
♦ 4
♣ A 8

If you take a diamond finesse or a heart finesse and it loses, the opponents will cash a club and the contract will be set.

You should plan to use the diamond suit to provide discards for one of your losers. The best way to do it is a "ruffing finesse", which is a backward finesse. Win the ♣A and draw trumps. You can afford to draw all the trumps, even if they split 4-0, because you have another entry to dummy.

Now lead a diamond to the ♦A and then play the ♦Q. If East covers with the ♦K, ruff it, return to dummy with the ♥K, and discard your losers on the established diamonds. You will make thirteen tricks.

If East does not cover the ♦Q, discard your club. If West wins with the ♦K, the remaining diamonds are high and your losing hearts can be thrown on the ♦J10. You will make twelve tricks.

So you make your contract whether the ruffing finesse wins or loses! Magic!

Key point

A ruffing finesse is sometimes better than a normal finesse.

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Introduction to the count

Start small, and keep counting

By **JOAN BUTTS**, BRISBANE

IF YOU really want to improve your declarer play, aim to "count" hands. It's a fact of life that you can't move to the next skill level until you do this. The bad news is...it's NOT easy. It requires a lot of concentration. But the good news is that practice makes perfect and these tips will help.

What do we mean by "counting"?

It's knowing the distribution of the opponent's hand/s by mentally remembering the cards they play to each trick, and therefore working out the defenders' shapes. If you start trying to count a hand and then you forget or lose the count, leave it and start again on the next hand. Don't be frustrated and give

up, because the more you try the easier it will become.

As declarer, the most important things to consider are:

1) Always count the trump suit.

As soon as dummy goes down, make a special note of how many trumps your side has. Say you have six and dummy has three. That's nine. Keep that information stored away, but then focus mainly on how many trumps are missing and how they will be distributed.

If you have nine, four are in the opponents' hands, and you usually hope they will split 2-2, but more likely 3-1, and hopefully not 4-0. As you play trumps, watch to see how the four

trumps fall in the opponents' hands.

2) Some suits are more important than others.

It's hard work to count every

suit. With experience you will recognise when dummy comes down which suits you need to count, the trump suit always, as already mentioned, and often your other long suit.

3) Remembering the bidding will give you clues in counting.

Let's say West opened a preemptive 3♥. They are likely to hold seven of them. Subtract from thirteen the number of hearts you see in your hand and dummy. Then you know how many hearts East has. And Hold That Thought!

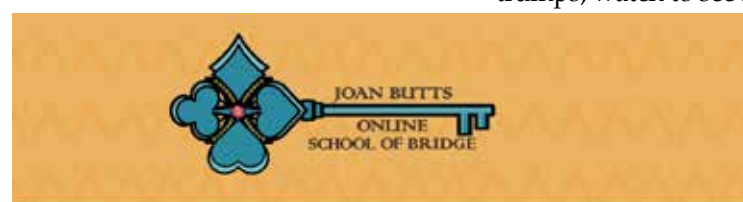
4) The best way to get a count is when an opponent shows out in a suit.

Make a mental note of how many their partner has or had. And Hold that Thought!

5) Counting will help you make the right play at the right time.

Try to play the "easy" suits first to get a count on the "difficult" suits. If you've kept a count as the hand has progressed, it will often help you know how to play an important suit at the end.

The real trouble with counting is that sometimes we FORGET as we go along, and the more tricks that are played the harder it is to remember the distributions. Our minds tend to focus on how to play suit combinations etc, and we are sometimes surprised at the cards the defenders play, and we lose the thread of the count. But practice makes perfect, so please keep trying on every hand. Success will be guaranteed and you'll feel great satisfaction! ♦♦



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Mike's advice

Bid the whole hand

By **MIKE LAWRENCE**, NASHVILLE

THIS ARTICLE will show you a layout with all four hands in view. Your job is to determine how the bidding should go before reading further.

E/NS ♠ J 2
 ♥ A K J 7 3
 ♦ A J 7
 ♣ 9 7 2

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

♠ 9 6
 ♥ 10 8 5
 ♦ Q 9 3 2
 ♣ A J 5 3

Auctions have a way of being different at many tables. The sequence that I expect to be the most popular is this one:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		pass	pass
1♠	2♥	2♠	3♥
all pass			

The first two passes do not really deserve comment. West has the first serious decision to make.

Comments on West's 1♠ bid:

It is common to open with a little less than a full opening bid third seat. Some Wests might not open this 11-count in first or second seat, but in third seat, it is a good strategy to bid



1♠. East should take care not to go crazy after West's 1♠ bid, and as long as West can count on East to exercise some caution, this is a fine choice of bids.

Comments on North's 2♥ bid:

Most players would bid 2♥. The hand has good hearts and nice diamond values, but the balanced shape is an automatic minus. It's worth a 2♥ call, but be aware that this hand is not as good as it looks. North would prefer to have this hand instead:

♠ 2 ♥ AKJ873 ♦ K983 ♣ 94

This hand has three fewer high-card points, but its good shape would be worth more ticks to compensate for that.

Comments on East's 2♠ bid:

Perfect. This is worth 2♠ and not an iota more. East has four good trumps, but the ♥Q is of dubious value and the shape is terrible.

Comments on South's 3♥ bid:

Facing a two-level overcall, the South hand has decent values. It has three trumps – adequate facing a two-level overcall; it has a tiny bit of shape; and it has a fair collection of HCP. South is bidding 3♥ in part because he does not want to let West play in 2♠. This is a minimum raise, though – nothing here to get excited about.

Comments on West's pass:

There is a tendency for opener to compete to the three-level on hands that do not warrant it. There is nothing about this West hand that suggests a bid. He can hope that his king and his queens will translate into defensive winners, but that is all the optimism he is entitled to. Repeating a mantra shared by other authors, and quoted many times: balanced hands are usually best on defense, not offense.

Comments on North's pass:

Even though North has a fair overall, he should pass 3♥. South's raise can be a bit pushy here. Note that North has some of the same things to think about that West did. North has a balanced hand, which means that the hand will not play particularly well.

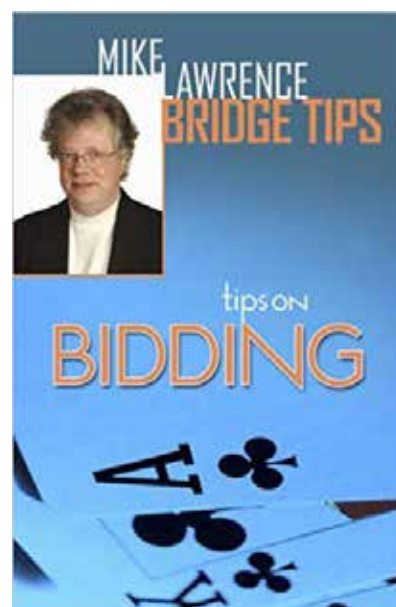
Comments on East's pass:

Clear. What does East know? He knows West didn't want to bid over 3♥. He knows West may have opened light in third seat. He knows that his own hand is balanced. If West wishes to defend against 3♥, that should be okay with East.

What should East have to go on to 3♠? Here's an example of a hand that has all of the needed requirements:

♠ K1054 ♥ 8 ♦ Q875 ♣ Q1064.

- It has four trumps.
- It has shape. That singleton heart is a big plus.
- It has some help in his long suits. West rates to have something in the minors, and East's honours will combine well. ♦♦



Mike Lawrence's popular CD, *Counting At Bridge*, is now available from Australian Bridge for just \$48.

Email us for details at mail@australianbridge.com

The marked finesse

Watch the opponents' discards

By **TINA ZINES**, SYDNEY

You are South, declarer in 6♠.

			♠ A K Q 9
			♥ 4
			♦ A K Q J 10 9 8
			♣ 2
♣10			
			♠ 10 5 4 2
			♥ A 7 6 5
			♦ 7
			♣ Q 5 4 3
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♥	pass
pass	dbl	2♣	2♠
pass	4NT	pass	5♦
pass	6♠	all pass	

East opens 1♥, passed around to North who doubles – the hand is way too strong for a 2♦ overcall.

East shows a second suit, cancelling the double. You, South, are no longer compelled to bid. Nonetheless, you venture 2♠ to show some values.

Yikes! The leap to 4NT (simple Blackwood) has you worried that partner might be expecting more. Still, you show one ace and soon bemusedly find yourself declaring 6♠.

West leads a club, taken with the ♣K by East, who switches to the ♥K. You win the ♥A and are feeling better now, for dummy has only spades and diamonds

left, and they look pretty solid. You win two top spades in dummy – but East, who plays the ♠7 on the first round, discards on the next. What is your plan?

Solution

With East having shown out on the second round of spades, you know that West started with ♠J-x-x-x.

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

If you play the third top spade from dummy, West will follow low, retaining the ♠J as the setting trick.

Can you capture West's ♠J, and make the contract? The good news is that dummy's spade strength is sitting "over" West – in other words, dummy plays after West as long as you can lead from the South hand for the *marked finesse*.

As the ♥A has already gone, the only way to get to hand is by leading diamonds and trumping the second round, even though the diamonds are

all winners! There is a further catch: you must trump high, with the ♠10. Now lead your remaining spade. It is important that it is a small one (which is why you ruffed with the ♠10 previously) so that when second hand plays low (the ♠8), dummy's ♠9 wins and the lead is in the right hand to draw the last trump, for 12 tricks.

If you make the mistake of ruffing in hand with a small trump, rather than the ♠10, this will be the position:

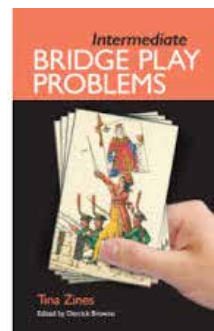
	♠ Q 9	
	♥ —	
	♦ K Q J 10 9	
	♣ —	
♠ J 8		♠ —
♥ 9 3		♥ Q J 10 8
♦ 6		♦ —
♣ 9 7		♣ A J 8
	♠ 10	
	♥ 7 6 5	
	♦ —	
	♣ Q 5 4	

You can lead the ♠10, and let it run, but you will have no way to get to dummy to draw the final trump.

You'd also have been defeated if East had led ♣A at trick two. Phew!

Key point

- Watch carefully to see if the defenders follow suit to trumps.
- If bad news strikes, stay composed. There may be a solution.



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Matchpoint matters

An in depth analysis of vulnerability in competition

By JULIAN FOSTER, SYDNEY

MANY EXPERT players, who spend most of their time playing in Teams games, dislike playing Pairs games because they think Matchpoint scoring is artificial. Maybe it is, but there's no doubt it has far more dimensions to it than Teams scoring, so it's a much more fascinating (and challenging) game for those who are interested. This article will touch on just one of those dimensions: competitive auctions. The vulnerability and scoring has a huge influence on how you should compete at Matchpoints. Take this deal from the Dick Cummings Pairs.

Board 27 ♠ A 8 2
S/Nil ♥ 6 5 2
♦ K 5 4 3
♣ A K 7

♠ Q 4
♥ Q J 10 4 3
♦ 10 6
♣ J 8 5 4

♠ J 9 3
♥ A 7
♦ A J 9 8 7
♣ Q 10 2

♠ K 10 7 6 5
♥ K 9 8
♦ Q 2
♣ 9 6 3

You hold the West cards. The auction:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♣	pass	pass
pass	1NT	pass	1♠
?			pass

Do you bid? The immediate reaction of many players would be, "Of course not, I have a bad hand and only 6 points." It may surprise those players to learn that I think there are two very good reasons to bid at Matchpoints. The first reason is the auction. Let's look into it a bit more deeply. North's 1NT rebid usually shows 12-14, but in third seat it would not be unusual to open with as little as 10 points. South probably has 5-10 points (he responded to 1♣ but he passed initially). So let's average those and give North twelve

points and South seven. We have six. That totals 25 – which leaves 15 for partner! OK he probably won't be quite that good, as he didn't act over 1♣. But there is absolutely no doubt that partner has quite a few points over there. What's more, they are probably well placed points, as they are sitting over North's opening hand. So in a way, perversely, the weaker our hand is, the more partner has and the better placed the cards might be for us. Hence it may well be safe to bid.

The second reason is the vulnerability. It has a huge impact on competing at Matchpoints. In particular no one vulnerable is the best time to compete. Before we come back to this particular board, let's briefly consider why. Suppose we have the option of playing 1NT or letting them bid 1NT and defend against it. The table at the bottom of this page shows the respective scores we get for the different number of tricks that our side makes (I am assuming no one is doubling anything at this stage). This illustrates something that most top matchpoint players know. When no one is vulnerable there is a massive



advantage to declaring. You are only going off in 50s, but you would only be taking them off in 50s when you are defending. Here we see that there is no reasonable number of tricks we can take in 1NT where it is better for us to defend.

Contrast that with everyone vulnerable. Now we want to defend every time. Many players instinctively assume that the most dangerous time to compete is when we are vulnerable and they are not. But in fact at Matchpoints the worst time to compete is actually when everyone is vulnerable (because when we defend we are taking them off in 100s not 50s).

This table on this page only considers playing or defending 1NT, but exactly the same principles apply to other partscore contracts. Try constructing a similar table and see for yourself! So let's now return to board 27. You are at the "magic" love all vulnerability. That's the second reason to bid. West duly bid 2♥ at the table. Let's look at what happened and, more importantly, how the scoring options now changed for both sides.

The table on the next page lists the various contracts that did get played on the board, the number of tricks made, and the matchpoint percentage they each earned (or would have earned).

- What can we see from this?
- If NS allow EW to play 2♥ undoubled the best score they can realistically get is 38%.
 - If NS double 2♥ they risk a bottom but have a chance at a top.

Vulnerability	What we do	Score for each number of tricks taken by our side				
		5	6	7	8	9
No one vulnerable	Play 1NT	-100	-50	+90	+120	+150
	Defend 1NT	-120	-90	+50	+100	+150
	What's best?	Play	Play	Play	Play	Same
Us vulnerable, them not vul	Play 1NT	-200	-100	+90	+120	+150
	Defend 1NT	-120	-90	+50	+100	+150
	What's best?	Defend	Defend	Play	Play	Same
Us not vul, them vul	Play 1NT	-100	-50	+90	+120	+150
	Defend 1NT	-120	-90	+100	+200	+300
	What's best?	Play	Play	Defend	Defend	Defend
Everyone vulnerable	Play 1NT	-200	-100	+90	+120	+150
	Defend 1NT	-120	-90	+100	+200	+300
	What's best?	Defend	Defend	Defend	Defend	Defend

- When NS play 2♠ and make the same number of tricks as 1NT they score fewer matchpoints every time (3% less for 10 tricks, 7% less for 9 tricks, 19% less for 8 tricks, 14% less for 7 tricks).

What can we learn from this?

- It is definitely right for EW to get NS out of 1NT even if they subsequently land in 2♠.
- It is definitely wrong for NS to pass out 2♥.

At the table NS doubled 2♥. The defence slipped up by cashing ♠AK before attacking diamonds, so EW ended up making eight tricks for +470. But that's not really important. What is important is to look at what NS risked by doubling. Eight tricks undoubled for -110 was only getting them 6% anyway, eight tricks doubled for -470 got them 0%. The double cost them a mere 6%.

What's more, it gave them the chance of 100% if they had taken EW two off.

Also what did EW risk by bidding 2♥? Very little. If NS pass it out, EW get 62% even if they go two off. If NS double it EW still get 62% for one off. The only downside for EW is if they go two off doubled. If NS bid on to 2♠

Contract	Tricks	No of tables	NS score	NS matchpoints	EW matchpoints
1NT by North	10	2	+180	99%	1%
	9	1	+150	94%	6%
	8	8	+120	72%	28%
	7	5	+90	31%	69%
	6	2	-50	17%	83%
2♠ by South	10	1	+170	96%	4%
	9	7	+140	87%	13%
	8	12	+110	53%	47%
	7	5	-50	17%	83%
2♥ by West	6	0	+100	38%	62%
	7	1	+50	25%	75%
	8	3	-110	6%	94%
2♥ doubled by West	6	0	+300	100%	0%
	7	0	+100	38%	62%
	8	1	-470	0%	100%

EW have still improved their matchpoints for every number of tricks made compared with letting NS play 1NT.

Of course, as we saw earlier, the equation changes dramatically at different vulnerabilities. It is also a totally different question at IMPs. You almost certainly wouldn't bid at IMPs because

you have virtually nothing to gain (the imp difference between -120 for 1NT or -110 for 2♠ making eight tricks and either -50 or -100 for 2♥ going off undoubled is negligible) and a lot to lose (-300 or even -500 on a really bad day).

Moral of the story: at love all at Matchpoints, in partscore battles – BID! ♦♦

Book excerpt from Ron Klinger's *A Good Game Of Modern Bridge*

The opening bid

Chapter 2: Opening with a balanced hand

By **RON KLINGER**, SYDNEY

When considering your opening for a balanced hand, we all start by adding up our HCPs. That should not be the end of it. When your hand pattern is 5-3-3-2, you should make an allowance for the five-card suit. Add one point for any five-card suit, but be prepared to add two points for a strong five-carder, one with three or four honours.

Playing 1NT as 15-17, what would you do with these four hands?

Hand One:

♠ 7 6 5 ♥ 8 4 ♦ A 9 7 ♣ A Q J 8 2

Hand Two:

♠ A 10 5 ♥ K Q 8 ♦ A J 7 ♣ 5 4 3 2

Hand Three:

♠ A 10 ♥ K Q 8 ♦ A J 9 8 4 ♣ 6 4 3

Hand Four:

♠ A J 10 ♥ A 9 ♦ 9 8 2 ♣ A K J 5 2

1. Open 1♣. You have only 11 HCP, but the excellent club suit definitely justifies an upgrade.

2. Open 1♠. There is nothing special about this 14-count.

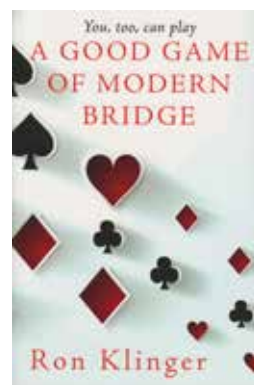
3. Open 1NT. Again you have 14 HCP but adding a point for the five-card suit entitles you to upgrade this hand to 1NT.



4. Open 1♣. You do have 17 HCP, but the great club suit makes this hand too strong for 1NT. Your plan should be to open 1♣ and rebid with a jump in notrumps.

You adopt the same approach for your 2NT openings. If you play 2NT as 21-22 balanced, then a 20-count with a five-card suit can be upgraded to 2NT, while 22 HCP plus a five-card suit would be too strong and should be bid 2♣-2♦-2NT.

For a new and different approach to valuing balanced hands, *A Good Game Of Modern Bridge* goes on to discuss a 5-4-3-2-1 point count. The method is not for everyone, but it has been adopted by a number of experts.



Concealing information

If they know you have it, get rid of it

By **EDDIE KANTAR**, USA

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	3♣	pass	2NT
pass	6NT	all pass	3♦

West leads the ♣J.

Bidding commentary: 6NT is a normal contract with 34 HCP between two balanced hands. Notice that 6NT has 11 top tricks, but 6♦ is cold. It's not easy to uncover a 4-4 minor-suit fit after a 1NT or 2NT opening bid.

Lead commentary: Leading against 6NT is not like leading against 3NT. When the opponents land in 3NT, they figure to have about 25-26 HCP. Here, West has 6 HCP, so if 3NT is the final contract, East figures to have about 8-9 HCP, hopefully with a spade honour or two. When the opponents land in 6NT, however, figure them for about 33 HCP. In this case West can figure East for about 1 point! A spade lead is no longer attractive. When leading against 6NT, holding most or all of the missing high-card strength, and lacking a perfect sequence, lead passively. In this case the ♣J stands out.

Play commentary: With 11 top tricks, declarer has two chances for an extra trick: hearts 3-3 or the spade finesse. In order to test both, declarer attacks hearts, the longer combined suit, first. A heart is ducked at trick two, a technique that allows declarer to retain control of the suit – especially if the suit breaks badly, you will want to be on lead yourself after drawing the third round of trumps.



Declarer wins the likely club return, runs the diamonds, and tests the hearts. If hearts are 3-3, there are 12 tricks. If not, there is always the spade finesse to fall back on.

With A-x-x facing K-x-x-x, A-x-x-x facing x-x-x, or x-x-x facing A-K-x-x, the normal way to develop three tricks in the suit is to duck the first round followed by cashing the high honour from the short side (first two examples) and then over to the other honour. If the suit does not break 3-3, declarer retains the lead and is still in control.

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	pass	4♥	6♠
all pass			

West leads the ♥Q.

Bidding commentary: Think "four-level preempt" when looking at an eight-card suit along with less than opening bid values. After the 4♥ opening, South bids what he thinks he can make.

Four-level preempts can do that to you.

Play commentary: At trick one, South must play the ♥K under the ♥A! Why? When the ♥Q is led, East knows South has the king but doesn't know who has the jack. From South's point of view, the king and jack are equals once the queen is led. In order to protect himself, South must play the card he is known to hold, the king. If the king is played at trick one, East may be torn between leading a second heart, trying to cash the ♦A, or even shifting to the singleton club. If South plays the ♥J at trick one, it's a no-brainer. East can safely lead a heart knowing West will ruff. After all, South still has the ♥K.

Both the declarer and the defenders have to be alert to play cards they are known to hold, if it cannot cost a trick. When the card you are known to hold (♥K) has an equal (♥J), it is mandatory to unload the one they know you have. The longer you clutch "known" cards that can safely be played, the easier you make life for your opponents. Don't be a friendly declarer or defender. Think of known cards that have equals as hot potatoes. Get rid of them! ♦♦

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Heads I win, tails you lose

Insurance to guarantee that you always finish in front

By **ANDREW ROBSON**, LONDON

MAKE CHOICES that reward you with a good board even when you make the wrong choice. Heads I win, tails you lose – that's a good game to play! Iain Climie reports this instructive and very typical Pairs decision. All his bridge instincts told him to take a finesse, yet he played for the drop. His instincts to finesse were right (as so often), yet his choice to reject the finesse was logical, correct and netted him an 80% board!

W/NS ♠ —
 ♡ A Q J 8 4
 ♦ A 10 7 3 2
 ♣ J 9 6

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

 ♠ 8 7 4
 ♡ K 6 5 3
 ♦ K J 8 4
 ♣ 10 8

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	2♠ ¹	3♠	4♥
4♠	5♥ ²	pass	pass
dbl ³	all pass		

1. Michaels, showing 5-5 in hearts and an unspecified minor.
2. On the strength of the void spade. Still a marginal decision at adverse vulnerability, given his poorish minors.
3. Not quite sure where West got this double from. With dummy about to table a big red two-suiter, West can't be sure of beating 7♥, let alone 5♥.

Climie, South, saw West try to cash his three top clubs. He ruffed the third, drew trumps (splitting 2-2) and had to pick up diamonds to chalk up +850. He crossed to the ace of diamonds and led back a second diamond, East playing low. Decision time.

At Teams, declarer would think along the following lines, "West's 4♠ bid suggests he does not have two losers in both red suits; he is more likely to be shapely with a singleton diamond. Finesse!"



W/Nil ♠ K 6
 ♡ K 2
 ♦ 9 7 5 3 2
 ♣ J 9 6 3

♠ A Q 10 5 3 2
 ♡ A 3
 ♦ 8 4
 ♣ 10 8 4

At Pairs, declarer thinks along entirely different lines: "If I finesse and lose to West's queen, I have a very bad score, because 4♠ would not be making (losing four red-suit tricks) and I have taken a phantom sacrifice. On the other hand, if I play for the drop (rising with the ace) and that is wrong because West has a singleton, I am nonetheless getting a good result for 5♥ doubled down one. Many Wests will be allowed to play 4♠, and with West having a singleton diamond, that will make."

Climie duly rose with the ♦K, losing -200 (when West discarded) instead of collecting +850 (which he would have earned by finessing).

Mildly disappointing – yes. But at Pairs, not very disappointing, because the Traveller revealed the expected row of East-West +420s. Losing 200 scored 80%. Funny old game, Pairs.

Here is the flip side (top of next column). East-West bid to 4♥ and you as South unilaterally (and dubiously) bid 4♠. East doubles, not looking too confident. How do you play on an opening heart lead?

The point is this: many East-Wests will be declaring 4♥. Because you clearly cannot make 4♠, your only hope of a good Matchpoint result is for 4♥ to make (as well as, naturally, 4♠ going for less than the value of 4♥). If the opposing spades are 3-2, you have made a phantom sacrifice and are booked for a (near) bottom whatever you do. So don't worry about that. You must assume 4♥ is making, which means spades are 4-1. After winning the heart lead, you cross to the ♠K and lead a spade back (East playing low) to your... ten.

If West wins the jack (or indeed follows low), you've a mouldy result – which you lost in the bidding. However if West discards on the second spade, you can thank your lucky stars: 4♥ is making and you needed to finesse to escape with -300.

In other words: it is no use making a choice that will get you a bad board even if you make the right choice.

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Suit combinations part 2

Let their king fall on your small cards

By **DANNY ROTH**, UK

LAST MONTH we looked at the following problem:

♠ A 6 3 2
 ♥ A K 9 7
 ♦ A 10 9 7
 ♣ 5

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

West led the ♥Q and you won in dummy, East playing ♥3. On the ♣5, East played the ♣K. We saw last month that the best play for setting up the clubs was to win the ace and continue with the jack, hoping to drop a doubleton ♣10 or ♣9.

This month's deal is the same, except the ♣8 has been replaced with the ♣10:

N/NS ♠ A 6 3 2
 ♥ A K 9 7
 ♦ A 10 9 7
 ♣ 5

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♥	pass	2♣
pass	2♦	pass	3NT
all pass			

With a slightly better club suit than last month, you bid game outright instead of inviting with 2NT. Again, the lead of the ♥Q is won in dummy.

This time, on the ♣5, East plays the ♣2. How do you play now?

Too many players would finesse the ♣10 without a second thought. Again, a 3-3 break will see you home in all cases; admittedly, a finesse will gain overtricks when East has exactly ♣KQx. Here you must consider the more likely 4-2 splits; the finesse gains where East has exactly ♣KQxx but the ♣A followed by a low card gains where either defender has a doubleton honour – far more likely.

You should thus win the ♣A and play a low club.

The deal:

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

Note that the ♣J or ♣10 on the second round achieves nothing in the 3-3 cases and loses an unnecessary trick and the contract when either defender has a doubleton honour.

Points to remember:

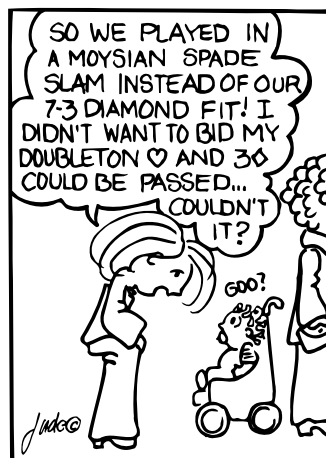
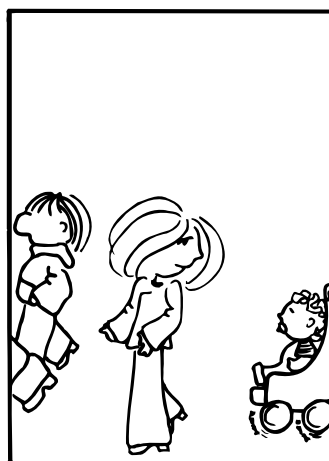
1) The recommended play applied because you could afford to lose two tricks in the club suit. Had the situation required five club tricks, the finesse would be correct as you must hope for exactly ♣KQx with East.

2) Still discussing the case where five tricks are required, consider the position where the bidding marks most or all of the outstanding honours with West. The correct play now would be the ♣A followed by a low card. The only hope is to find ♣KQ doubleton to your left.

3) Notice, therefore, how the case of a particular hand can throw the "percentage" fanatic right out, and how vital it is to understand what you are doing rather than playing, parrot fashion, on the basis of "The expert said..."



Go Ahead Laugh by Jude Goodwin



The full count

An advanced counting example (with an unhappy ending)

By **LARRY COHEN**, FLORIDA

I welcome you to a humbling deal from the Gatlinburg Regional. This mammoth tournament attracts the world's best players. When I arrived on a Monday night in April, my first match featured 24 boards against one of the world's top 10 pairs. Our prize for winning? Twenty-four deals against Meckstroth - Rodwell. This is quite a tournament.

Several days later (against less famous opponents), I held:

♠ K J 10 9 7 ♥ 8 4 ♦ K 2 ♣ A K 9 7

Both vulnerable, the dealer on my left opened 2♥. My partner doubled, and right-hand opponent raised to 3♥. It is annoying that opponents are making and raising preempts so often; I would have liked more room. I felt this hand was too good to bid only 4♠, so I tried 5♠.



♠ Q
♥ —
♦ —
♣ Q 5 4 3

♠ J
♥ —
♦ —
♣ A K 9 7

There is some confusion about jumps to five of a major. When the opponents are bidding a suit, usually such a jump is a slam invite, looking for a control (ace, king, singleton or void). My hand (with two low hearts) was typical. Partner put me in 6♠ and this turned out to be a good contract:

♠ A Q 8 2
♥ 2
♦ A 8 7 5
♣ Q 5 4 3

♠ K J 10 9 7
♥ 8 4
♦ K 2
♣ A K 9 7

LHO led the ♥K and switched to a trump. Your thoughts?

Aside from the heart loser, the only other potential trick to be lost is in clubs. (Your other heart will be ruffed in dummy, of course). If clubs are 3-2 there will be no problem. You can also survive a 4-1 club break if LHO's singleton is the jack or 10. You will end up with a marked finesse against East on the third round.

Before touching clubs, it can't hurt to follow general principles. In an effort to learn about the lie of the cards, I drew trumps (they were 2-2), ruffed my heart in dummy and, in the process, ruffed out the diamonds (4-3, with opener having four) to leave:

Notice that I was careful to keep the higher trump in dummy, where it might be needed. Watch. I played a low club to the queen and all followed low. Now another club from dummy, East played low, and you?

Were you counting? LHO started with four diamonds, two spades, and presumably six hearts. The club he played on the first round should be his only one.

RHO started with ♣J10xx. I triumphantly put in the ♣9 (had RHO split, I had that crucial re-entry to dummy to finesse later), and ...

This was the full deal:

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

Shock and embarrassment. LHO won the ♣J, down one in a "cold" contract. LHO had only five hearts, and RHO had raised only to 3♥ with five-card support. They got me!

My teammates were surprised that their minus 680 was a loss (not a gain) of 13 imps. Sorry guys, but if I had to do it all over again, I'd make the same losing play. ♦♦

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www.australianbridge.com/biddingforum

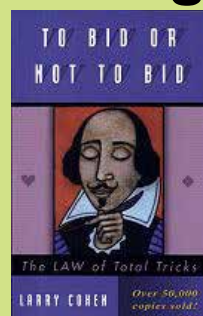
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All five problems appear on our web site, and readers are invited to submit their own answers at

www.australianbridge.com

The readers' answers to all five problems are discussed in our online bidding forum, moderated by Fraser Rew, Nigel Kearney, and Brad Coles.

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The headmaster's report

Keeping the danger hand off lead

By **DAVID BIRD**, LONDON

ON THE FIFTH round of the school duplicate, Neil Phillips and John Hutson approached the Headmaster's table.

"I wonder if he'll mention anything about us coming first in last week's game," said Hutson. "No fourth-form pair has ever won before."

"I doubt it," Phillips replied. "He and Charlie B finished seventh. I bet I know who took the blame for that!"

Hutson laughed. "Yes, indeed," he said. "It's not as if the Headmaster ever makes any mistakes."

The Headmaster glared at the fourth-formers as they took their seats. "I'm glad to see that you're enjoying the session," he declared. "What exactly were you laughing at, just now?"

"Nothing, Sir," Phillips replied.

The Headmaster maintained his fierce expression. "Ah, nothing at all, I see. It's lucky you didn't live in the 18th century. In those days people who gibbered foolishly for no reason were locked up in lunatic asylums."

"Were they, Sir?" said Neil Phillips. How times have changed, he thought. Nowadays, they only get put into detention.

This was the first board of the round:

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Neil Phillips	Reverend Benson	John Hutson	The Headmaster
1♥	dbl	pass	1♦
pass	4♠	all pass	2♠

Neil Phillips led the king of hearts and the Headmaster paused to assess his prospects. Provided East could be kept off lead, one of dummy's clubs could be discarded on the fifth round of diamonds. To prevent any chance of West crossing to the East hand in hearts, the Headmaster ducked the first trick. He won the heart continuation with dummy's ace and called for a low trump.

East inserted the ten of trumps and the Headmaster won with the ace. He was about to lead a second round of trumps when he noticed that Phillips had not yet played to the previous trick. What was the foolish boy thinking about?

A few seconds later, with the air of someone uncertain if he was doing the right thing, Phillips ditched the king of trumps under declarer's ace. The game could no longer be made. The Headmaster drew a second round of trumps with dummy's queen, West following, and then turned to the diamond suit.

East ruffed the third round with the ♠10 and switched to a club. Two club tricks put the game one down.

"Wow!" Hutson exclaimed. "If you keep the ♠K, you have to win the second round of trumps and I never get in."

Phillips returned his cards modestly to the board. "Yes," he said.

The Reverend Benson looked quizzically across the table. "What happens if you come to hand with a heart ruff and lead a low trump towards dummy's queen?" he asked. "Is that any good? Phillips would go in with the king, surely. He had king doubleton."

The Headmaster rubbed some imagined pain in his left arm and gazed around the room as if in search of a waiter.

"The boy might manage to play low, I suppose," Benson continued. "Dummy's queen wins and then you'd have to duck the second round to his king, rather than playing ace and another. You would be on a guess."

The Headmaster looked at Benson with a puzzled expression. "Are you still waffling about the last board?" he exclaimed. "Set that sort of example and it's no wonder the boys chatter so much in your lessons!" ♦♦



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It's your lead

The element of surprise

By **RON KLINGER**, SYDNEY

FROM THE FINALS of the National Women's Teams and the National Seniors' Teams:

1. Teams, West deals, EW vulnerable

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1NT ¹	dbl ²	2♥
dbl ²	all pass		

1. 12-14 HCP.
2. Penalty double.

What would you lead as West from:

♠ 8 7 6 ♥ A K 8 7 ♦ 7 5 ♣ 10 9 8 3

2. Teams, West deals, EW vulnerable

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	3♣ ¹	pass	3NT
all pass			

1. 6-10 points, 6+ clubs.

What would you lead as West from:

♠ A1043 ♥ K8542 ♦ K953 ♣ —



1. The short suit redemption

What you do not want to happen is to lead a suit where declarer can quickly dispose of some losers. It is not clear which suit to lead, but a short suit lead makes it less likely that this will allow declarer to score a vital discard. Leading a top heart does allow you to see dummy, but that could compress a trump trick in partner's hand.

Board 47	♠ K 5 4	
W/EW	♥ Q 9 4 2	
	♦ J 6	
	♣ A K 6 4	
♠ 8 7 6	♥ A K 8 7	♠ A Q J
♥ A K 8 7	♦ 7 5	♥ —
♦ 7 5	♣ 10 9 8 3	♦ A K Q 10 9 8 2
♣ 10 9 8 3		♣ 7 5 2
	♠ 10 9 3 2	
	♥ J 10 6 5 3	
	♦ 4 3	
	♣ Q J	

Principle: When playing for penalties, a short suit lead is often best.

Awards: ♦7: 100; ♥A or ♥K: 70; spade: 50; club: 30.

After the auction given, West led the ♣10: four - two - queen. Declarer overtook the ♣J with the ♣K and cashed the ♣A, ditching a diamond. He lost two hearts, one diamond and three spades, one off, East-West +100.

After a diamond lead, East wins two diamonds and then a club shift leads to two down and +300 for East-West. Similarly, leading a top trump works and can produce two down.

At the other table, East-West bid to 5♦, one light, NS +100 and +5 imps.

In the Women's final, the contracts were East 2♦ +130 and East 3♦ +130.

2. Doing the unexpected

Awards: low diamond: 100; low spade: 60; ♠A or a low heart: 40.

Principle: When the opponents are ready for the lead of a suit you have bid or shown, it can work well to lead an unbid suit.

Board 54	♠ K 2	
W/EW	♥ A 9 3	
	♦ 8 6	
	♣ Q J 8 6 5 3	
♠ A 10 4 3	♥ K 8 5 4 2	♠ J 9 6
♥ K 8 5 4 2	♦ K 9 5 3	♥ J 6
♦ K 9 5 3	♣ —	♦ Q J 10 7 2
♣ —		♣ 10 7 4
	♠ Q 8 7 5	
	♥ Q 10 7	
	♦ A 4	
	♣ A K 9 2	

Jon Free (West) from Perth struck gold when he led a low diamond after the auction given. South took the ♦A and tried to steal a quick spade trick with the ♠5, but Free was quicker. He grabbed the ♠A and continued diamonds to take 3NT one down, East-West +50. At the other table, after a similar auction, West led the ♥4. South made 11 tricks, +460, +11 imps.

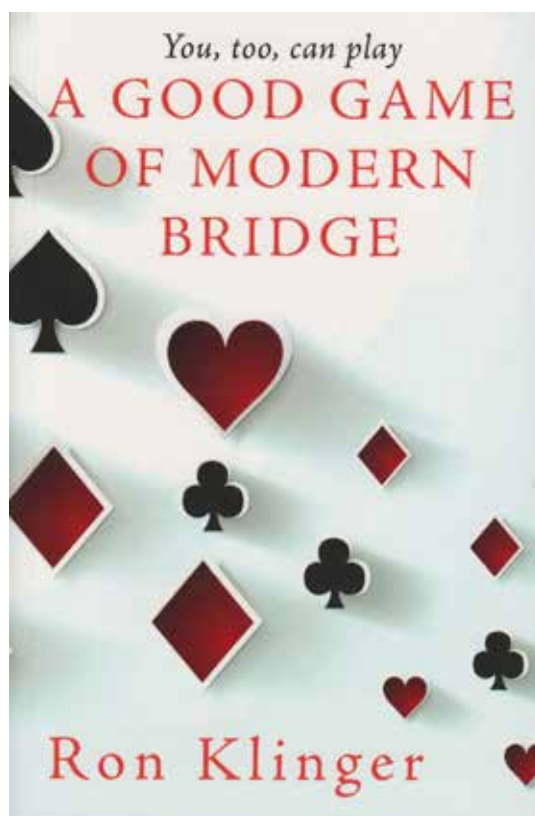
In the Women's final, both Souths were in 3NT: +400 (♠3 lead) and +460 (♥4 lead). ♦♦

Ron Klinger's A Good Game Of Modern Bridge presents the methods and conventional bids which reflect current standards.

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BIDDING FORUM

With **BRAD COLES**, CANBERRA

The following problem appeared on the Puzzle Page of our November issue. Thank you to all the readers who sent in answers.

This month's question is about overcalling with a balanced five-card major.

♠ K J 5 ♥ Q 9 7 4 3 ♦ Q J ♣ A K 6
WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH
1♣ ?

Playing Pairs, with vulnerable opponents, your right-hand opponent has opened 1♣. Should you bid your suit, or show your balanced hand?

We gave this problem to a panel of 16 experts. Make your choice before looking at the experts' answers.

CALL	PANEL
1NT	10
1♥	6

Unlike most of our problems in this column, this one is really just an academic exercise rather than a critical bidding decision. Both options are perfectly reasonable, and the "correct" answer is whatever works on a given day.

Many years ago, people were reluctant to ever open 1NT with a five-card major, and this made notrump auctions quite difficult. For example, if you open 1♥ with a 2-5-3-3 16-count, what would you rebid after partner responds 1♠? Rebidding 1NT would imply a 12-14 hand, so there was never a good answer in positions like this.

These days, the above hand is a routine 1NT opening bid. But we are not talking about opening bids today; in this case, the opponents got in first, and we need to decide whether to overcall with 1NT.

MATTHEW THOMSON: 1NT. Clear. I'd open 1NT, so why not overcall 1NT?

TIM BOURKE: 1NT. This takes space away from East-West and describes the hand better than a 1♥ overcall.

PATRICK HUANG: 1NT. The modern trend is to overcall 1NT whenever it's a reasonable option.

STEVE AND BARBARA SHEPARD: 1NT. Looks much more like a strong notrump opener than a heart overcall to us.

PAUL LAVINGS: 1NT. Looks like notrumps, with the hearts as a useful stopper.

LARRY COHEN: 1NT. Gets more of the hand off my chest than 1♥ would.

As you can see, the advantage of overcalling 1NT is much the same as the advantage of opening 1NT: it describes our point range perfectly, which would be harder to do after a 1♥ bid. The downside, of course, is also the same: we may miss a 5-3 heart fit. This won't always be a problem though – there are many hands with a 5-3 fit where 3NT is actually a better spot than 4♥. With such good cards in our side suits, we may be able to run nine tricks without even touching hearts, opposite something like

♠ A 3 2 ♥ 8 5 2 ♦ K 10 3 2 ♣ Q 3 2

DAVID APPLETON: 1NT. I choose to get the values across, even at the expense of missing a better 5-3 heart contract.

KATE MCCALLUM: 1NT. I'm not a big fan of overcalling 1NT with a five-card major, but it's such a poor suit that I'm going to pretend not to see it.

TIM COPE: 1NT. The heart suit looks too anaemic to bid – this is right on values and partner will have more system to manoeuvre us to the right contract opposite a 1NT bid than a 1♥ overcall.

RON KLINGER: 1NT. More practical than 1♥. Allows partner to transfer to spades if suitable and can locate five hearts with 2♠ if strong enough. Runs the risk of a penalty double, but so what? Any bid runs some risk. This might keep West quiet with less than a nine-count.

Ron is the only 1NT panellist who mentions the risk of a double, and that of course is the big danger with overcalling 1NT. With a 1NT opening bid, you will only be doubled if West has a very big hand; however, once East has opened the bidding, the chances of West being able to double are much higher.

ANDREW ROBSON: 1♥. 1NT is asking to be doubled so opt for safety. No other option.

What is a bidding forum?

In this column, we give you a bidding sequence where it is your turn to bid. Your job is to look at your hand and make your choice. Then we give the same problem to a panel of experts and see if they agree with you.

Sounds simple? Let's find out...

MIKE LAWRENCE: 1♥. Might be hard to bring in the hearts in a notrump contract. This hand is extremely slow. I can imagine getting doubled in 1NT and going down quite a few.

SARTAJ HANS: 1♥. 1NT is too creative at this stage.

FRANK STEWART: 1♥. I dislike 1NT with primary club stoppers and a heart suit that may take time to establish. The hand is not good enough to double then bid 2♥.

While 1NT received a clear majority of the votes, the following comments sum up what a close decision it really is:

BOB JONES: 1♥. I would open this hand 1NT, but as an overcaller, I prefer to show my suit. I wish I could give a good reason why. It just feels like the right thing to do. Maybe the panel will change my mind.

ZIA: 1♥. Italians / Meckwell would bid 1NT. This hand depends on the heart fit. I am strangely not convinced with my own answer – it's close.

The final word: One of the main principles of constructive bidding is when opener has a balanced hand, he should bid notrumps as soon as possible (that is, as soon as there is a range-appropriate notrump bid available). These days, experts are expanding the definition of "balanced", and bidding notrumps more often, including with a five-card major and sometimes even with a six-card minor.

Here's a preview of next month's hand:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ Q 9 2	♥ Q 9 4 3	♦ 10 9	♣ 10 7 5 2
pass	1♦	pass	pass
2♥	dbl	pass	?

Playing Pairs, with opponents vulnerable, will you pass your partner's take-out double? If not, which suit should you bid?

Send us your answer to this problem, along with the other problems on page four, with an explanation of why you made that choice. We'll tell you what the experts think in the March issue. ♦♦

Novice and Restricted Results

TOWNSVILLE NOVICE TEAMS

- 1 Wilfred Tapiolas, Mervyn Smith, Kelly Walker, Russell Woolley
- 2 Ann Smith, Elinor Murray, Fred Cole, Robert Mischlewski
- 3 Mick King, Jan Harris, Richard Wix, Sandra Morris

QCBC TEAMS

Novice

- 1 Gordon Plant, Ruth Anderson, Wendy Casey, Barbara Moni
- 2 Pamela Steele, Dennis Lincoln, Robert Fulcher, Joan Mladen
- 3 Rod Wilson, Bernard Trefeu, Patricia Tan, Clive Carter

Restricted

- 1 Eugene Pereira, Rex Meadowcroft, Vesna Markovic, Voyko Markovic
- 2 Barry Koster, Kiku Mukai, George Gibson, Lynne Layton
- 3 Alan Corkhill, Jennifer Vickers, Neil Hansen, Deanne Gaskill

NOOSA NOVICE PAIRS

- 1 Alexa Parker - Lesley Cobb
- 2 Julie Scott - Elizabeth van Vugt
- 3 Penelope Bailey - Meredith Bunn
- 4 Barry De Lacy - Sue Downs
- 5 Tony Thorne - Elizabeth Thorne
- 6 Helen Lawson - Meg Pace
- 7 Barbara & Gerard van der Horst
- 8 Melva Leal - Sue Lind
- 9 James Taylor - Robyn Vincent
- 10 Sue Smith - Gillian Hogarth

TOOWONG GRADED TEAMS

Grade B

- 1 Linda Norman, Wendy Gibson, Trevor Dwerryhouse, Winny Chan
- 2 Sandra Johnson, Lex Ranke, Jack Rohde, Patricia Larsen
- 3 Chris Snook, Denise Hartwig, Raymond Ellaway, Cheryl Stone

Grade C

- 1 Barry Koster, Kiku Mukai, George Gibson, Lynne Layton
- 2 Kevin Hamilton-Reen, Mary Simon, Eugene Pereira, Rex Meadowcroft
- 3 Ben Leung, Darren Brake, Jasmine Skeate, Ellen Visscher

SUNSHINE COAST NOVICE PAIRS

- 1 Pauline Clayton - Tricia Merefield
- 2 Bob Davies - Bob Hannam
- 3 Gillian Baker - Inta Devine
- 4 George Blacklock - Judy Mawbey
- 5 Upasana Shanti - Lynda Laffan

HUNTERS HILL RESTRICTED TEAMS

- 1 Vicky Cahill, Ken Cahill, Teresa Wilson, Paul Roach
- 2 Libby Tonkin, Greta Davis, Jacky Gruszka, Cheryl Henke
- 3 Kit Meyers, Fiona Fawcett, Esther Lee, Peter Koorey

CENTRAL COAST LEAGUES CONGRESS Pairs

- 1 Kim Dalling - Douglas Dalling
- 2 Mary Poynten - Tony White
- 3 Lyn Lynch - Len Pascoe
- 4 Jean Moran - Ronald Moran
- 5 Richard Carter - Jay Novak

Teams

- 1 Shannon Queree, Sandy Boyd, Kathy Duke, David Duke
- 2 Kathryn Ivits, Alma van der Walt, Ron Meaney, Claire Wild
- 3 Peter Mackey, Alison Mackey, Kim Dalling, Douglas Dalling

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS SWISS PAIRS

- 1 Vivienne Kissane - Rosalind Hayden
- 2 Jane Gray - Teena Mckenzie
- 3 Gill Tidey - Margie Hullah
- 4 Robert Stammel - Claire Stammel
- 5 Barbara Lane - Gail Thompson
- 6 Suzanne Garner - Helen Acton
- 7 Celia McKew - Susan Whyte
- 8 Martin Coote - James Harvey
- 9 Monika Nilsson - Carolyn Young
- 10 Susan Stewart - Ann Duncan

QUEENSLAND TEAMS OF THREE

Grade A

- 1 Pat Eather, Judy Quick, Wendy Casey, Peter Nilsson
- 2 Darren Brake, Oliver McCarthy, Paddy Taylor, Richard Ward
- 3 Eugene Pereira, Daria Williams, Sameer Pandya, Gregory Gosney

Grade B

- 1 Dominique Treloar, Jamshid Vazirzadeh, Alison Banks, Tony Treloar
- 2 Merrill Lance, Sue English, Jane Tagney, Murray Perrin
- 3 Sue Calthrop, Wes Assaad, Wendy Cuthbert, Jim Porter

Grade C

- 1 Christine Lane, Jane Lennox, Marg Lane, Craig Francis
- 2 Tracy Heading, Barb Barnett, Alan Boyce, Helen Bougoure
- 3 Leanne Rooijmans, Debra Green, Karen Amos, Richard Wallis

Australian Novice Calendar

QCBC OPEN AND NOVICE IMP PAIRS

Brisbane, 12 January

SUMMER FESTIVAL

Canberra, 8-19 January

KENMORE GRADED PAIRS & TEAMS

Kenmore, 26-27 January

TOOWOOMBA NOVICE PAIRS

Toowoomba, 2 February

GOLD COAST CONGRESS

Gold Coast, 21-29 February

TOOWONG NOVICE IMP PAIRS

Toowong, 8 March

NSW NOVICE & RESTRICTED PAIRS

Sydney, 21-22 March

SUNSHINE COAST GRADED TEAMS

Sunshine Coast, 22 March

SURFERS PARADISE NOVICE PAIRS

Surfers Paradise, 28 March

TASMANIAN FESTIVAL OF BRIDGE

Launceston, 26-29 March

Includes TFoB Restricted Pairs

Andrew Richman, asp@abf.com.au

KIAMA NOVICE SWISS PAIRS

Kiama, 29 March

Richard Warren, 0429 575 104

AUTUMN NATIONALS

Adelaide, 30 April - 4 May

Jinny Fuss, autumnnationals@gmail.com

BARRIER REEF CONGRESS

Yeppoon, 1-4 May

Includes Novice and Restricted events

Dick Metcalfe, brc@yeppoonbridgeclub.com

AUSTRALIA-WIDE NOVICE PAIRS

Played in clubs all around the country in the week of 25-31 May, for players with fewer than 100 MP.

NSBC@LINDFIELD NOVICE/RESTRICTED

Teams 20 June, Swiss Pairs 21 June

Sydney, mikeprescott7@hotmail.com

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Adelaide, 11-23 July

Adel Abdelhamid, aabdelha@icloud.com

AUSTRALIA-WIDE OPEN PAIRS

Played in clubs all around the country in the week of 25-31 August.

AUSTRALIA-WIDE RESTRICTED PAIRS

Played in clubs all around the country in the week of 25-31 October, for players with fewer than 300 MP.

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