

February 2018 ACBL Bulletin Notes

Jeff Kroll
Sam Khayatt

The Bidding Box (p. 37 – 39)

Problem 1

George/Claude auction: Claude opens 1D even though he has longer clubs than diamonds. He does that to prepare to bid 2C on his second bid. He can't bid clubs first and then diamonds as that would be a reverse showing a strong hand (approximately 17+ points) which this hand doesn't have. The options are to bid the diamonds first and then clubs, or to bid clubs twice. Bidding clubs twice is probably worse as that would show six clubs.

George's 2S bid is fourth suit forcing. Most play that forcing to game as George/Claude play it. The bid shows nothing about spades. After George rebid the hearts showing a strong suit, Claude supported them with his Q on his fourth bid. George then drove to slam.

Notice during the play, the SQ can be thrown on a diamond honor, so there is no need to take the spade finesse.

Problem 2

Bob/Jerry auction: Although the 2S bid typically shows four spades, there are instances where it is made with only three. The 2N bid is the Spiral convention which is used to find out if the 2S bidder has three or four spades and is on the top or bottom of his bid. 3H shows four spades and a minimal opener. 3C would show three spades and a minimal opener. 3D would show three spades and a good opener. 3S would show four spades and a good opener.

Problem 4

Bridge Bulletin auction: 2C is new minor forcing asking for three-card support in spades or four hearts. 3C denies both three spades and four hearts. So the subsequent spade raise showed a nice doubleton in spades.

Problem 5

It's a close call for East as to whether open 1N or 1S. I prefer 1S with those super spades. Bid what you're looking at.

It's Your Call (p. 40-43)

Problem 4

2S, 3C and 3D are the popular solutions. 2S is not a reverse as partner has already bid 2D, so you can't bid 2C. The favorite is 2S as it's the cheapest bid. The downside is that partner will think you have four spades, and you may end up playing in a 4-3 fit. Although a 4-3 fit could be fine.

Some choose 3C – bid what you're looking at.

Problem 5

Although there is some risk to the bid, the majority of the panel bids 2N, showing six clubs and four diamonds. A double would show five clubs and four diamonds, but it allows partner to convert it into a penalty double which is OK as you have good defensive values. If you had seven clubs, you would have bid 3C the first time. If you were 5-5 in the minors, you would have made an unusual 2N call the first time.

Page 44, Alder

Column 1: Lead the S6 (fourth best) against 3N. Now you need to know how many spades partner has. On the first trick, third hand high, partner must play the nine. When he gets in, he gives count. Most players use present count; they lead low from an odd number and high from an even number of cards left in the suit.

Column 3: Lead the C5 (fourth best) against 3N. The winning defense is to duck the club return after partner wins the K. You know to duck as the 6 is the highest club you can't see so that means partner started with K 6 or K 6 3. If partner has K 6 it's probably hopeless, so hope for K 6 3. When you duck, play the C4. Since you led the C6 (fourth best), partner now knows that you started with five clubs.

Page 45, Parrish

Column 1, two bullets, during the auction the first two questions to get right are:

1. Do we have game?
2. Do we have an eight (or more)-card major-suit fit?

Column 1, bottom: With 25+ HCP, you want to be in game. Note Larry Cohen recommends 26 in this same *Bulletin*. But I think most modern players are more aggressive and expect to be in game with 25 HCP, and often with 24 HCP when playing IMPS (teams). When playing IMPS, especially vulnerable, you can't afford to miss the game bonus.

Column 3, first paragraph: When you know you're going to game, you cannot make a bid that partner could pass. Sometimes you will go right to game, but sometimes you need to explore, so responder often bids a new suit (fourth suit forcing convention is popular) to keep the auction going.

Page 46, Harrington

Column 2, top: In pair games (matchpoints), overtricks are often critical as you are scored the number of pairs you beat rather than on the margin by which you beat them.

An odd number of cards out in a suit splits evenly over 60% of the time, so it is often right to play for that split.

Column 3, third paragraph: Careful play calls for two high spades to be cashed before playing clubs to reduce the chance of the defenders getting a ruff.

Page 47, Berg, column 3, after the deal: Over the weak 2D bid by the opponent, your 3H bid is strong. Don't pre-empt a pre-emptor. When they make a weak jump, your jump is strong.

Page 49, Cohen

This is a more conservative view than the Parrish column on page 45. He makes similar points about level and trump suit. With two balanced hand he requires 26 HCP as opposed to the 25 Parrish requires.

I think it's best to push a bit; it's generally good for your side to declare a majority of the hands as it's easier to declare than defend. Let the opponents make the mistakes instead of your side.

Column 3, fifth paragraph: 1N - 2C | 2S - 2N is inviting 3N. So don't do it with a hand that can't invite – like the 6 HCP hand shown.

Page 51, Horton: The point of this article is when East shows a long strong club suit, he is likely to be short in diamonds (since most of his cards are clubs). So play East for a doubleton diamond honor. However, it costs nothing to cash the AK of spade first. When East shows a singleton spade and a singleton heart, it's now unlikely that he has only two diamonds, so play West for the doubleton diamond honor.

Page 53 Kantar

Hand 1: Pass. 1S is not forcing. It's only when responder bids a new suit (and notrump has not been bid by either partner) that it's forcing. Opener must do more than bid a new suit to make a forcing bid.

Hand 8: 2C is fourth suit forcing (usually to game). Note George's 2S bid on problem 1 on page 37. The 2C bid does not show or deny clubs, so it is quite risky for partner to bid notrump without a club stopper.

Page 54, Boehm

Column 1, third paragraph: When knowledgeable opponents stop in a two-level partial where they show a fit, you will usually get a bad result if you let them play it there. This is especially true with a 2H contract, and a somewhat less true in a 2S contract. The 2S contract is harder to balance over as it often pushes the bidding to the three-level.

Balancing at matchpoints is more important than balancing at IMPS (teams). Letting them make 110 is not too terrible in IMPS but it is at matchpoints (pairs). At IMPS you don't want to get a really bad score. At matchpoints you want to make the bid that works most of the time, and you will live with it when it doesn't work.

Column 3: Balance only when you think they have a fit, don't balance when they haven't shown that they do.

Once partner balances, it is usually wrong to raise him. He has already bid based on what he thinks you have. The balancing seat means partner has already passed. So the balance is the one tasked with protecting the partnership.

Page 55, Cohen, column 3

Declarer must false-card with the D8 on the diamond lead. By false carding with the D8, West can't tell if D6 of diamond lead on the second trick is the lowest diamond that East has. If it is, then East knows to lead a club – the lowest suit/suit preference signal. If not he should lead a spade, highest suit.

The point is West would have to guess what to return after ruffing the diamond on the second trick. Make them guess.

A general rule is that declarer (to mislead the defenders) signals the same way defenders do. High if you want the suit continued, low if you don't.

Page 56, Challenge of the Month: the key to making this is to cut communication between the defenders. You don't want East to get in and lead a heart through your K. So on the opening lead, duck the spade and discard a club. Now you can set up the clubs without ever letting East in.

Page 57, Bergen

Point 2: When it's obvious that the opponents are going to bid game, and that you will sacrifice, do before they bid the game. Take away their bidding room make them guess.

Point 4: Voids are powerful when sacrificing, singletons are helpful, doubletons not so much, and flat hands are a problem.

Point 5: Sacrifice to the level that you are prepared to go to as soon as possible. Don't make a bid that you are sure that they will bid over and then make a second raise of your partner's pre-empt.

Point 6: Usually let the opponents play at the five-level.

Point 7: When a vul opponent opens four of a major, he is usually eager to play it there. If you have reasonable shape (like a 5 card suit and a singleton or void in the opponent's major), strive to bid.

Page 59 and 61, Kantar, Deal 1

The key to this deal is hand is to ruff a heart, pull trump (returning to your hand with a club), and then dump the AK of clubs on your high trumps so the clubs in your hand will be good – they won't block.

You need clubs to split 2-2 for this to work. But you should expect that. The four clubs you are missing are 6, 4, 3, 2. If the C4 were a singleton lead, East would play the 2 and not the 6. So unless West led the 4 from 4, 3, 2 the clubs are going 2-2.

Page 60, Lawrence, column 2, third paragraph: On defense, standard play is to win the lowest of touching honors to help partner figure out that you have the honor right above it. If you play the higher honor first, in this case the Ace, and then lead the King, you are telling partner that it is an unusual situation. It's often a doubleton, although in this case it can't be a doubleton. You have three hearts and dummy has two. If partner has two, then declarer has six hearts. That would make him a very unusual declarer to open 1C with a six-card heart suit.

In this case East is telling West that East has strong hearts and to unblock the HT.