

August 2018 ACBL Bulletin Notes

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Maple Lead Melee (p. 16-21)

Page 20, column 1, deal

When South bids 4S he should have a decent eight-card suit or an excellent seven-card suit. All North needs to know is how good South's spades are. North has the A in the three side suits and a diamond suit that can be expected to cover any losers outside of the spade suit. South's 5S response to the RKC (Roman Key Card) inquiry must show the AK of spades as North is looking at the other three key cards in his hand. The 5S bid also shows the SQ. Unless a defender has five spades to the T (highly unlikely – 3.9% of the time), there are no spade losers. Course, there could be a diamond ruff on the opening lead – but that is, too, unlikely. So it's an easy 7S bid for a great board.

Page 20, column 2, deal

West's 1D overcall hurt the defense; it gave declarer two quick spade discards when East won the DA and returned the suit. Overcalls are partnership agreement. We play them as lead directing; we promise that we can at least tolerate the lead and usually want it. We expect the overcaller to have at least two of the top four honors.

Declarer played a low spade after East took his ace and returned the suit. It is unlikely that East was leading away from the SQ into dummy's void, so declarer played low. West was forced to play the SQ, setting up declarer's SJ, and giving declarer the contract plus an overtrick. All this thanks to the diamond overcall on an A empty suit. At the other table, a club was led and the contract was set.

Page 21, column 1, first deal

East made a normal 2S opening bid and West dutifully led the SQ. East can see every spade except the T. So he overtook the SQ and returned a heart so that he would get a heart ruff as long as partner had the HA, for an immediate ruff, or the CA for a delayed heart ruff. NS is down one.

At the other table the S3 was played to discourage the spade continuation, but West did not find the HA and a small heart, so the contract made.

Page 21, top of column 3 (deal at bottom of column 2)

After the C3 lead, East returned the C8, a high club (maybe the 10 would have been better). When giving partner a ruff, the denomination of the card to be ruffed is a suit preference signal. East was letting West know to return the higher ranking suit (spades) so that East could win the trick and give West another ruff.

Page 22, Cocheme, column 1, deal: This example shows why the 4-4 spade fit plays better than the 5-4 heart fit as long as spades split 3-2, will they will 67.8% of the time. The long heart gives you the discard that you don't get if hearts are trump.

Page 26, Jones, fifth paragraph: This 7 HCP hand can drive to slam when bid properly. You have a double fit with partner, and first round control (CA) and second round control (singleton heart) in two short suits. This is a good demonstration of the power of the double fit with 5-6 in partner's suits and controls.

The Bidding Box (p. 37 – 39)

Problem 3

One West chose to double on his first call, while the other overcalled 2H. We have found that doubling and having your partner bid your 5 card major only happens on your birthday and Christmas – it doesn't happen very often. The West hand is not strong enough to double and bid, so the heart suit is likely to be lost if it's not bid right away. One West did double and bid and ended up in a hopeless contract.

Problem 6

The 4S cue bid (showing the ace) in the *Bridge Bulletin* auction makes it easier to bid the club slam.

Problem 7

The *Bridge Bulletin* auction's 3D bid is a practical bid that is needed because West needs to make a forcing bid. The diamonds suit is West's second-best – and it's a minor. It's better to mislead your partner about the length of a minor than the length of a major. The 5C and 5H bids are cue bids showing aces that make it easier to bid the notrump slam. At match points, it is worth taking a small risk and bidding notrump instead of the major suit slam (or game) when it's likely you will take the same number of tricks in notrump.

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

Problem 2

The 5C pre-empt bid typically shows nine clubs or eight clubs and a side four-card suit. Often that fourth card in the side suit takes a trick. Sometimes it sets up, sometimes they discard incorrectly.

Problem 5

This is a deal where you are strong enough to double and bid and most do. Although some pass as the opponents have bid your two best suits. Some bid a spade as spades and notrump seem to be your only viable contracts and bidding notrump with a small singleton club would not give a good picture of your hand.

Page 46, Harrington: This is a good plan for declaring 4H. The key is too set up dummy's long spade. When there are six cards out, they will split 4-2 48.5% of the time and 3-3 35.5% of the

time. So setting up the fifth spade is a good plan. Since you'll need to lead spades five times, you need five entries to dummy. This is an example of not following the general rule of trumping in the hand with the short trumps. You need to trump with the long trumps to set up the fifth spade. The fact that dummy's spades are weak makes you work harder to set them up, but it's a good technique to develop.

It is usually better to trump in the hand with the short trump suit. However, reasons for trumping in the hand with the long trumps include:

1. Setting up dummy's long suit (as in this example)
2. Ruffing to avoid a loser in a suit led by those unpleasant opponents
3. Setting up needed transportation

Page 48, Berg

Column 1, first deal: These good points are made:

1. Don't play to the first trick until you have a plan (meant as declarer, but also appropriate on defense)
2. Decide if you're going to make your hand the master or dummy the master – which are you going to make good
3. Consider eliminating losers by these methods:
 - a. Discarding on a long suit
 - b. Finessing
 - c. Ruffing

Column 2, fifth paragraph: If you have a good reason not to pull trumps right away (like you need to get rid of losers first, or you need all/most/some of the trumps in the short trump hand to ruff with then don't pull immediately what you can't afford. However, without a good reason, pull trump immediately.

Page 51, Lawrence: The key to making is to take your two high spades right away and just cross ruff the hand. Opening the East hand with a weak 2S bid has two advantages:

1. It lets partner know you have six spades. If you don't open 2S, it will probably be impossible to convey that information.
2. A 2S pre-empt takes up a fair amount of bidding space and pressures the opponents. The more often you make them guess, the more often they will guess wrong.

Unfortunately, the negative side of the 2S bid is that you are likely to get a spade lead that you don't really want. That's what happened on this deal.

Page 53, Kantar, hand #

1. Bid 1D don't skip the diamonds to bid hearts, you are strong enough as responder to bid both.
2. Bid 2D, you don't have the 17+ points needed to reverse.

3. Bid 2S (Kantar also likes 4H), but we cue bid when we have an opener in response to partner's takeout double.
4. 2C. Responder needs to bid a new suit to force partner to bid.
5. 4H. Partner is showing hearts and spades; it is likely that partner is short in clubs and you can cross ruff the hand.

Page 54, Boehm: As declarer, by holding up a winner you can often cut communications between the defenders. Similarly, by doing so as a defender, you can cut communications between declarer and dummy. In both cases you want to stop opponents from running a long suit. Boehm has examples of both.

Page 56, Challenge of the Month: When you have an easy hand to declare, consider what could go wrong and how you can protect against it. Also, when one defender pre-empts, it makes it more likely that suits will not split well for declarer; the partner of the pre-emptor will have length in the other suits (including trump). In this case when West pre-empts 4H, there is an excellent chance the declarer will not get the usual 3-2 spade split and that East will have at least four spades. Declarer can guard against this by ruffing the HK high and finessing against the ST after West shows out on the second round of the suit.

Page 57, Bergen: Discarding is often difficult. As long as it doesn't burn needed entries, run your long suit(s) and force the opponents to discard. Make it easy on yourself; keep track of only the discards in a suit that you are trying to set up.

Page 58, Walker: Bid and play in tempo. Do your thinking while the opponents are bidding or playing so that you can act in tempo at your turn. Breaking tempo can (1) give unauthorized information to partner and (2) let declarer know you have a problem.

Page 60, Lawrence: At one table, South makes a dangerous double and at the other table South makes a practical 4H bid. Bridge is not always fair; the 4H bidder went down, and the doubler landed in a fortuitous 5D contract that made.

One reason some players struggle to improve is because they remember (and keep using) a bid or play that worked once, but is against the odds. Bridge is a game of statistics and you are better off acting with them than against them.

Page 62, Stewart, column 3, fifth paragraph: Stewart echoes Bergen; make them discard on your long suit. It is often difficult and sometimes impossible for them.

Page 64, Dear Billy

Second column, third paragraph: Don't bid Blackwood with a void.

Second column, fourth paragraph: 4NT over partner's 3NT is always quantitative (invitational), never Blackwood.