

August 2022 ACBL Bulletin Notes

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The most useful items for most of our readers are:

1. “USBF Team Trials: Spector claims USA1” by Amy Casanova (p. 16). Both sets of World Champions chose to preempt 3C in second position (non vul vs vul) holding six clubs to the AK and four hearts to the J.
2. “Custodians of Intelligence: What has history taught us?” by Simon Cocheme (p. 26). Shuffle your cards before you put them in the board. If you do not do so, a sly player who picks up the hand next can use the arrangement of your cards to “see” the play of the hand.
3. “The Bidding Box” moderated by Josh Donn (p. 36-39)
 - Problem 1. There is some risk playing in a suit other than your longest – especially missing the A of that longest suit. If you are long, the opponents are short and they may win the A and a ruff before you get in. In this case, in match point scoring, 6♣ gets a top score of 12, while 6♠ gets an average score of 6. 6♣ is cold, while 6♠ is likely to lose the ♣A and a club ruff.
 - Problem 4. The West hand is strong enough to open 1♥ due to its shapely distribution even though it has no aces and only 11 HCP. Furthermore, because of the singleton, opener must accept the game invitation when responder shows a four-card limit raise.
 - Problem 5. It is strongly recommended that, in response to new minor forcing (NMF), opener shows the three-card support for partner’s major before showing four cards in the other major. The vast majority of the time, responder is looking for the three-card support of his suit.
 - Problem 7. There are times to deviate from the guidelines. In this case it’s appropriate to ask for keycards without all suits stopped as it’s highly likely that opener’s 19–20-point hand has all suits stopped. And if this is not the case, you have not identified your weak spot to the opponents.

4. "It's Your Call" by Sue Munday and Karen Walker, Deal 1 (p.40). This deal raises several interesting points.

- A Snapdragon Double is made after three suits have been bid. It shows the fourth suit and tolerance (usually a doubleton) for partner's suit.
- Rigal brings up the interesting possibility of leading away from the ♥A if defending 3♠. That's an absolute no-no for most players. In the "Defensive Maneuvers" (p. 54), Paul Ross states, "Never underlead an ace against a suit contract."

However, in this case, South believes that partner is short in hearts and almost certainly has more than one trump. South can win the first trump lead with the ace, cash the ♥A, and then give partner a ruff.

Of course, South could cash the ace first but it's possible that doing so will crash partner's king or queen. Also, underleading the ♥A may fool declarer. Declarer will assume that North holds the ♥A. If the ♥K turns up in dummy, declarer may duck, giving North the opportunity to win the ♥Q.

We would give that a try.

5. "Startup Bridge: Let's look at the minor suits" by Lynn Berg (p.47). This piece discusses when to respond to partner's minor-suit open in a major vs. when to do so in a minor. Berg also points out that it is unlikely that partner opened a three-card suit. In standard methods a 1♣ opener is made on three clubs about one-sixth of the time. A three-card diamond opener occurs only one in 25 times.
6. "Lessons Learned: The trolley problem" by Michael Berkowitz (p.48). Understand when it appropriate to balance, even if your hand is not perfect.
7. "The Real Deal: No excuse" by Larry Cohen (p. 55). Leave your emotions out of declarer play and focus on the way to make the contract. In this example, declarer must make use of the intermediate hearts.
8. "Challenge of the Month" (p. 55). Use a loser-on-loser play to make the contract.
9. "Test Your Play" by Eddie Kantar (p.59), Deal 2. End-play West to make the contract.

Our Favorites

“The Bidding Box” Problem 4, moderated by Josh Donn (p. 37).

Problem 4

West deals. Both vulnerable.

West

♠ K 10 5 2

♥ K 9 8 5 2

♦ 3

♣ K Q 7

East

♠ J 9 3

♥ Q 7 6 4

♦ A 8 7

♣ A J 3

The West hand is strong enough to open 1♥ due to its shapely distribution even though it has no aces and only 11 HCP. West has two quick tricks. Each unsupported king is worth half a quick trick and the ♣KQ is a quick trick.

Furthermore, because of the singleton, opener must accept the game invitation when responder shows a four-card limit raise.

The East hand is worth a four-card limit raise. A standard raise would be 3♥. A Bergen limit raise would be 3♦. The hand is short of a game force as it has the worst possible distribution – pancake flat.

Opposite a four-card limit raise the *Bridge Bulletin* auction recommends going to game with a singleton no matter how marginal the opener. So, 4♥ it is.

There are no minor suit losers and either one or two spade losers, depending on the location of the ♠Q and whether declarer can finesse against it.

There are one or two heart losers, depending on the split and location of the heart honors.

The contract is not ice cold, but it will make the majority of the time. And there is always the possibility of help by the defense.

“Lessons Learned: The trolley problem” by Michael Berkowitz (p.48)

Berkowitz writes that it is almost always correct to bid something in the pass out seat (North in this case) when not vulnerable. The only time we would pass it out with the North hand non vul is when we had long and strong hearts.

We would usually bid with the North hand even vulnerable at match points. We think that the opponents are about to make their contract for a good board so we don't have much to lose. At IMPs, we are much more careful about bidding when vulnerable as a big negative number may lose the match.

If East/West were bidding spades we need to be a bit more careful as we are being forced to the 3 level.

East/West have found a likely eight-card fit; 2♥ is likely to make. We would like to push them to 3♥

Dlr: South	♠ K 2		
Vul: E-W	♥ A 9 8 2		
	♦ A J 8 3 2		
	♣ A 2		
♠ 8 5		N	♠ 10 9 4
♥ J 4		W - + E	♥ K Q 6 5 3
♦ Q 9 4		S	♦ K 6 5
♣ Q J 8 5 4 3			♣ K 6
	♠ A Q J 7 6 3		
	♥ 10 7		
	♦ 10 7		
	♣ 10 9 7		

where they might go down. Or, maybe we can make something ourselves or at least go down for a negative score less than the -110 we will get if they make 2♥.

1m – P – 1♥ – P | 2♥ – P – P – P (“m” is minor) is a similar situation. The opponents have found a 4-4 fit and will likely make 2♥ for a good score if we don't act.

The is situation is NOT similar if the same opponent bids and rebids hearts. No fit has been established if the opponent's partner has not supported. So, there is no need for us to act. We don't need to go down to prevent them from doing so.

“The Real Deal: No excuse” by Larry Cohen (p. 55)

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	2♥	All Pass

The auction was a very simple 2♠ – 4♠. West leads the ♥J, won by the ♥A.

South is unhappy to be playing 4♠ instead of 3NT where he has nine top tricks. However, part of bridge is to focus on the task at hand. This world champ went down when he did not set aside his emotions.

After drawing trump, all declarer has to do is play the ♥T, letting East win. East will win the second heart honor (declarer pitching a club), but dummy's ♥9 will take a trick (another club pitch), bringing the total to ten.

Declarer takes six spades, two hearts, a diamond and a club.