

November 2023 ACBL Bulletin Notes

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These are the articles that we believe will benefit our readers the most.

1. "The Bidding Box" moderated by Josh Donn (p. 42-45).
 - a. Problem 1: The *Bridge Bulletin* auction gets to the best score by leaving in the double of 3H. East has a defense-oriented hand; 3NT is unlikely to make with only one heart stopper. Both contestants pushed to game: the likely-to-fail 3NT and the hopeless (on a 3-3 fit) 4♠.
 - b. Problem 6: The *Bridge Bulletin* auction gets to the best score by thinking about how the hand will play, choosing a 3NT contract (9 tricks) over a 4♥ contract (10 tricks) despite the 7-3 heart fit. There are too many fast losers for the heart game, East has stoppers in the unbid suits, and the hearts are likely to run.
2. "Card Play 101" by Phillip Alder (p. 50). Deal 1. When partner leads low and we cannot beat the dummy, we give count. Here West leads the ♥4 and East, holding no honor, plays the ♥2. Playing standard count, the ♥2 indicates an odd number of cards. Playing a high card first indicates an even number of cards. West can see eight hearts: five in his hand and three in dummy. The other five hearts are likely to split 2-3. Declarer opened 1NT, so has at least two hearts, but declarer also denied a four-card major, so has no more than three hearts. Based on East's signal, West knows that declarer began with a doubleton heart. When West gets in with the ♦K, he can cash the heart suit from the top.
3. "Parrish the Thought: Keeping the auction low is stronger?" by Adam Parrish (p. 51). Two keys to effectively bidding strong hands:
 - a. Keep the auction low to allow for more bids to describe your hand.
 - b. Make forcing bids even if it pushes up the level of the auction.
4. "Reasoning with Robert: More on competing over preempts" by Robert S. Todd (p. 54). When RHO opens 2♥,
 - a. With 15-18 HCP, a balanced hand, and a heart stop, bid 2NT.
 - b. With 19-21, a balanced hand, and a heart stop, make a takeout double, intending to bid 2NT after partner's advance unless a 4-4 spade fit is found.
 - c. With a solid seven-card running minor and a heart stop, bid 3NT.
5. "Mike's Bridge Lesson: The need to compete (p. 58). After RHO opens 1NT,
 - a. It's best to compete with good suits and shape even without decent high-card points.
 - b. With six spades, bid 2♠ immediately to obstruct their auction, rather than double to show a long suit.
6. "Challenge of the Month" (p. 58, 61). Ruff the fourth club in dummy for the tenth trick to make 4H. Plan ahead and leave a high trump in dummy to ruff that fourth club.
7. "Chalk Talk" by Eddie Kantar (p 59). When the defense is trying to force you to ruff in the long hand, make a loser-on-loser play instead of ruffing. This keeps your long trump holding intact to guard against a 4-1 split.

8. "Build Better Bridge: Just don't do it! Finesse, that is – part 2 by Maryann Boardman (p. 60). As shown in the third deal, one reason not to finesse is to keep the dangerous hand off lead should the finesse lose.
9. "Boehm on Bridge: Par excellence" by August Boehm (p. 62). Making this 6♠ contract entails discarding two aces and a king to set up the heart suit.
10. Consults with the Doctor: Winning preempts in the 21st century" by Dr. James Marsh Sternberg (p. 69). In first seat with a nice six-card heart suit, four small spades, a diamond void, and some points in clubs, open 2♥. Don't let the four-card spades suit prevent you from bidding. It's important to preempt early to stop your opponents from exchanging information at a low level.

Our Favorites

"The Bidding Box" moderated by Josh Donn, Deal 6 (p. 44)

Problem 6	
East deals. E-W vulnerable.	
<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
♠ K 4 3	♠ A 8 5 2
♥ K J 7 6 5 4 2	♥ A 8 3
♦ 9	♦ Q J 2
♣ J 3	♣ Q 10 7

	W	N	E	S	
			1♣	P	Standard with 3-3 in the minors, no 5CM, and too weak for 1NT
	1♥	P	1NT	P	With a 4333 distribution, many bypass the four-card spade suit.
New minor forcing, looking for three-card heart support.	2♦	P	2♥	P	Confirms three hearts.
Game invite.	3♥	P	3NT		Game accept.

Auction

East has decent stoppers in the unbid suits, is wary of too many quick losers and hopes to run the heart suit. Therefore, he chooses the NT game rather than the heart game.

Play of the Hand

The minor suit cards are useful in a notrump contract but probably not in a heart contract. If the clubs and diamonds were Axx in both suits then 4H is superior. Even with Axx in one of the minor 4♥ is probably superior. Aces are quick winners; queens and jacks are slow winners that are more useful in notrump than a in suit contract.

“Chalk Talk” by Eddie Kantar (p 59).

		♠ A J 2	
		♥ Q 9 3	
		♦ 5 3	
		♣ A 8 7 6 5	
♠ 5	N		♠ 8 7 6 3
♥ A 5 4 2	W + E		♥ 7 6
♦ Q 10 4 2	S		♦ A K J 8 7 6
♣ J 10 9 3			♣ Q
		♠ K Q 10 9 4	
		♥ K J 10 8	
		♦ 9	
		♣ K 4 2	
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1♠
Pass	2♣	2♦	2♥
4♦ ⁽¹⁾	4♠	All Pass	
(1) Preemptive			

East leads the ♦ K and continues with the ♦ A. Most of the time this is an easy contract: five spades, three hearts and two clubs for ten tricks. Or you lose only one trick in each side suit.

When a contract looks easy that is a good time to consider what could go wrong. When there are five cards out, they will split 3-2 68% of the time. They will split 4-1 28% of the time, and 5-0 4% of the time. If the hearts go 5-0, it is just not your day. But you can protect yourself against the 4-1 spade break.

East preempted, which increases the odds that East has a singleton trump.

Ruffing the second diamond reduces your long-side trump holding to four. If you then pull four rounds of trump, you will be out of trump when the defense gets in with the ♥ A. The defense will then run the diamond suit and you will have no trump left to stop the run.

The solution is to discard a club on the second round of diamonds rather than trumping. You were always going to lose a club anyway, so this is a loser-on-loser play. Now if South continues with a third diamond you will trump in dummy (the short-side trump holding). Then you can pull trump and still have a trump left when you let the defense in with ♥ A.