

December 2023 ACBL Bulletin Notes

Jeff Kroll
Sam Khayatt

These are the articles that we believe will benefit most ACBL members:

1. “The Bidding Box” moderated by Josh Donn (p. 36-39), Problem 2. The *Bridge Bulletin* auction finds the optimal 4♠ contract. The key concept is how to handle 6-4 hands. With a minimum 6-4 hand, bid the six-card suit twice and then bid the four-card suit. With more than a minimum, bid the six-card suit, then the four-card suit and then rebid the six-card suit.
2. “Card Play 101” by Phillip Alder (p. 44). Both hands are examples of identifying a possible defense to set declarer and then proceeding as if all the cards are where they need to be. In each case there is only one line of play that will set the contract. The defense identifies this line by counting HCP, identifying which useful cards partner could hold, analyzing partner’s lead and playing carefully (for example, not blocking the suit the defense hopes to run).
3. “Parrish the Thought: Rebidding a suit shows at least six?” by Adam Parrish (p. 45). While rebidding a suit usually shows six of them, there are exceptions. One such exception is when you hold a five-card major and a weak hand. If partner opens 1NT, you will transfer to your 5CM and pass. Similarly, if partner opens a suit and then rebids 1NT, it is usually right to rebid your five-card major.
4. “Reasoning with Robert: Competing over three-level and higher preempts” by Robert S. Todd (p. 48). A standard bid that some players might not be aware of is a 4NT overcall of a 4♥ preempt. The 4NT bid shows a strong hand with both minors. The 4NT bid does not show spades because the auction is now beyond 4♠. An overcaller looking for spades would either bid 4♠ or make a takeout double, depending on how long and strong the spades were.
5. “Bidding Basics: Negative doubles – the end” by Larry Cohen (p. 49) The two key points of the conclusion of the negative double series are:
 1. After an auction that begins with a bid, an overcall and two passes, if opener has a singleton or void in the overcaller’s suit, opener should make a re-opening (takeout) double. If partner is also short in the overcaller’s suit, the pair has a fit somewhere. If partner has a stack in the overcaller’s suit, partner will happily convert the double to a penalty double by leaving it in.
 2. Without a fit for partner, it is reasonable to bid NT with a stop in the opponent’s suit. It is not necessary to have all suits stopped.
6. “Challenge of the Month” (p. 49, 54). Plan ahead; it is sometimes better to use a trump for transportation to the closed hand than to ruff with it.
7. “Ask Jerry” by Jerry Helms (p. 51). When you hold a strong six-card suit open the bidding. If neither a one-bid nor a two—bid is perfect, pick the better (more descriptive) one. But do open.
8. “Mike’s Bridge Lesson: How do you apportion the blame?” by Mike Lawrence (p. 52). When you preempt in first or second chair, one of the players you are preempting is your partner. If you have good support for both majors, do not preempt in a minor. Give partner a chance to show a major.

9. "Boehm on Bridge: Par excellence – part 2" by August Boehm (p. 56). The first deal is a "take all your chances" situation. First test the club suit for a 3-2 break, but do so in a way that ensures you are in the correct hand to set up the diamonds.
10. "My Bridge and Yours" by Frank Stewart (p. 62). This column is an example of using strong intermediate cards to create an end play that makes a 6♠ contract

Our Favorites

"Challenge of the Month" (p. 49, 54)

♠ 8			
♥ J 5			
♦ A 8 7 5			
♣ A K Q 9 7 6			
♠ 6 3		♠ 9 5 4 2	
♥ A K Q 10 7 3		♥ 9 4	
♦ K Q 10		♦ 6 3 2	
♣ 10 2		♣ J 8 5 4	
♠ A K Q J 10 7			
♥ 8 6 2			
♦ J 9 4			
♣ 3			
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
2♥	3♣	Pass	1♠
Pass	4♣	Pass	3♠
All Pass			4♠

West cashes two high hearts, East playing the ♥9 then the ♥4, showing a doubleton. Of course, you knew there was a good chance East had a doubleton as soon as you saw dummy. East did not raise West's overcall, so likely does not have three. West did not keep bidding, so likely does not have more than six.

West then plays the third high heart.

The key to this deal is to plan. You have lost two hearts and have two diamond losers. The clubs look like a great place to dispose of the diamond losers. One approach is to ruff the third heart with the ♠8, play a high club, ruff a club to your hand, draw trump, and get back to dummy (and the clubs) with the ♦A.

However, you are missing the ♠9. The six missing spades will likely split 4-2 and since East is shorter in hearts, he is likely longer in spades. Therefore, he is more likely to hold

the ♠9 and will overruff the ♠8. And if East does win the ♠9, he will knock out the ♦A. You will then need a 3-3 club break (36%), to pitch the two diamond losers before ruffing a club to your hand to draw trump.

Do not make the knee-jerk play of ruffing the third heart with dummy's ♠8.

The correct play is to let West win the third heart. If West continues with a fourth heart, ruff it in your hand. If West shifts to a diamond, win the ♦A and use the carefully-preserved ♠8 to get to your hand. Pull trump. Then cross to the ♣AKQ to pitch the two diamond losers. Making 4♠.

“Boehm on Bridge: Par excellence – part 2” by August Boehm (p. 56). Deal 1 (IMPS scoring)

<p>♠ A J 7 5 3 ♥ J 6 4 2 ♦ Q 6 4 ♣ 6</p>	<p>N W + E S</p>	<p>♠ 10 2 ♥ 7 3 ♦ A J 2 ♣ K Q 9 8 7 3</p> <p>♠ Q 9 8 ♥ A 10 9 8 ♦ 10 5 ♣ J 10 5 4</p> <p>♠ K 6 4 ♥ K Q 5 ♦ K 9 8 7 3 ♣ A 2</p>
--	--------------------------	--

The contract is 3NT in the South against silent opponents. West leads the ♠5, East plays the ♠Q and you win your ♠K. You cannot let East’s ♠Q hold because you cannot afford a spade through your ♠K. If East wins and plays another spade, you could lose five spade tricks before you get in.

As always, you plan. The key play here is to avoid the knee-jerk play of cashing the ♣A and playing a club to the ♣K. Sure this works if clubs split 3-2, which happens 68% of the time. You will take six clubs, a spade and two diamonds, making 3NT. A really good declarer wants to improve on those odds.

Since you are a really good declarer, you play a low club to the ♣K and a club to the ♣A. If both opponents follow, the nine tricks are still there to be taken, using the ♦A as an entry to the clubs. However, if the clubs are not 3-2, then you, the really good declarer, are in the correct hand to take the diamond finesse, hoping to get diamond tricks instead of club tricks. If the diamond finesse works and the diamonds are 3-2, you make the contract despite the bad club split. If the diamond suit does not behave, you have done all that you could. You have taken all your chances.