

January 2024 ACBL Bulletin Notes

Jeff Kroll
Sam Khayatt

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

1. “Method Bridge: Counting the right way at the table” by Matt Granovetter (p. 28). Based on the auction, West, holding four hearts, knows that the opponents’ hearts are divided 5-3. That leaves East with a singleton. West must lead a heart, win the first trump trick, and give East a ruff, setting the slam.
2. “Junior News” (p. 31). When trying to determine if partner’s double is takeout or penalty, look at your holding in the trump suit. If you have a singleton or void, partner usually has length and the double is for penalty.
3. “The Bidding Box” moderated by Josh Donn (p. 38-41).
 - Problem 2. The *Bridge Bulletin* auction gets to the 7♦ grand slam by jumping to 3♦, showing four diamonds and an intermediate opener.
 - Problem 4. In all the auctions West opens 1♣ and then jumps to 3♣ despite having only 14 HCP. The strong seven-card club suit makes the 3♣ bid correct – think tricks, not HCP.
4. “Card Play 101” by Phillip Alder (p. 46). If the only way to make the contract is to play a specific opponent for a specific card, do so. Counting the high card points each opponent has played will sometimes make it clear which opponent has a missing honor.
5. “Parrish the Thought: A year of hand evaluation” by Adam Parrish (p. 47). The 4-3-2-1 system point system under-counts aces and tens and over-counts queens and jacks. In the second column, Hand 1 is a 14-point hand that should be promoted into a 15-17 opening 1NT. Hand 2 is a 15-point hand that should be downgraded out of a 15-17 opening 1NT because it is not strong enough to show 15 points.
6. “Lessons Learned: Exploring Roman key card Blackwood” by Michael Berkowitz (p. 48). The first two responses to a key-card ask have two meanings: 1 or 4, and 3 or 0. There is usually enough information from the auction to know which value is meant. However, if you are not sure, assume the lower value in each pair. If partner has the higher value (4, not 1, or 3, not 0), he should bid again.
7. Reasoning with Robert: Fast arrival” by Robert S. Todd (p. 50). In a forcing auction, jumps show weak hands. With a strong hand, conserve bidding spade to fully describe your hand.
8. “Bidding Basics: Opening leads – sequences” by Larry Cohen (p. 51) Against a suit contract, the top of three in a row is a strong lead; the top of two touching cards is a decent lead. Against a notrump contract you should lead from three in a row -- or at least from two and half (two touching cards, then a gap, then the next card). An interior sequence lead (the jack from KJT9, for example) must be from a sequence that includes an honor (ten or higher).
9. “Chalk Talk” by Eddie Kantar (p 55). The key to making this hand is to discard your heart honors on the diamonds so that you can ruff dummy’s two small hearts.

10. "Build Better Bridge: Just don't do it! Finesse, that is – part 4" by Maryann Boardman (p. 56).
Basic strip and endplays. Remove all the safe exit cards from the opponents' hands (the strip) and then lead to a trick they will win (throw them in) so they have to lead something that gives you a trick.
11. "Boehm on Bridge: Par excellence – part 3" by August Boehm (p. 58). The first hand is an example of entry management taking precedence over the usual technique of first playing the high card from the short side of a suit. Also, extra tricks are usually made by trumping in dummy (the short trump side). In this case, it is trumping on the long trump side that results in extra tricks.

Our Favorites

"Chalk Talk" by Eddie Kantar (p 55)

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

Auction notes:

- 2NT is a game-forcing spade raise (Jacoby)
- 4♠ is a fast arrival bid showing a minimum opener.

West leads the ♦ J and you make your plan.

You can count nine sure tricks: six spades and three diamonds. You can also see five possible losers: three clubs and two hearts.

You can pitch two losers on dummy's ♦ AQ, but which two?

Nothing can be done about the club losers, other than to ruff the fourth one in dummy if they don't split. If the ♣ A is onside, then there will be two club losers instead of three, but still more than you can afford.

The key to this deal is to win the ♦ K, pull trump (ending in dummy) and then pitch the two hearts from your hand on the ♦ AQ. It may seem uncomfortable to pitch the ♥ KJ while holding on to the little clubs, but getting rid of the hearts from your hand enables you to trump dummy's heart losers. Now there are only the three possible club losers and no heart losers.

And... if the ♣ A is onside, you will make an overtrick: six spades, three diamonds, the ♣ K and the fourth club or a club ruff.

“Boehm on Bridge: Par excellence – part 3” by August Boehm (p. 58)

	♠ K 2										
	♥ K 4 3										
	♦ J 9 4 2										
	♣ 8 6 3 2										
♠ Q J 10 9	<table style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>—+—</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W	—+—	E		S		♠ 8 4
	N										
W	—+—	E									
	S										
♥ J 9 7 5		♥ Q 10									
♦ K 10 7		♦ A Q 8 6 5									
♣ J 5		♣ Q 10 9 4									
	♠ A 7 6 5 3										
	♥ A 8 6 2										
	♦ 3										
	♣ A K 7										

You are declaring 2♠; the opening lead is the ♠Q. How do you think about the hand?

When you are missing six cards in a suit you should assume they will split 4-2. So, assume both majors are splitting 4-2.

You should not expect to ruff a heart in dummy. Having led a trump, the defense will cause one trump to be removed from dummy on the first trick. In order to create the heart void in dummy, you will have to give up a trick. Whichever opponent wins the third heart trick will lead trump again, removing dummy’s last trump.

Count your likely tricks. There are three AK combinations (six tricks), so you need two more. The most likely source of the two more is the spade suit. But since you are expecting a 4-2 spade break, you must ruff two diamonds in your hand for tricks seven and eight. In order to be able to do this, two things must happen:

1. A diamond void must be created in your hand.
2. Two entries to the dummy must exist after the void is created.

Since the kings are the only two entries to the dummy, the ♠K cannot be wasted on the first trick. Win the ♠A, rather than the more usual “high card from the short side” ♠K, and immediately lead the ♦3, creating the diamond void in your hand. Now you can get to the dummy twice to ruff two diamonds.