

February 2024 ACBL Bulletin Notes

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

1. “Method Bridge: The right way to count – part 2” by Matt Granovetter (p. 31). The contract is 4♠. There are five small hearts in dummy and declarer holds the singleton ♥Q. West leads the ♥A, followed by the ♥K, declarer ruffing the ♥K. Proper declarer play is to play for the defenders’ hearts to split 4-3. The defense helped declarer by playing the first two rounds of hearts. If the hearts do split 4-3, declarer can set up dummy’s fifth heart for a club pitch and make 12 tricks. That extra trick is important at match points! If the hearts do not split, declarer can try the club finesse for the twelfth trick.
2. “Ruling the Game” by Matt Koltnow (p. 38). Two-way carding provides information about two suits simultaneously. For example, if we discard the ♥2, we might be saying that we do not like hearts AND that we do like clubs. Two-way signals are prohibited except on the first discard because it is difficult to play two-way signals in tempo for 13 tricks. The small pause that occurs when a player does not hold the right card for the message he wants to send conveys unauthorized information to the player’s partner. If we are playing a two-way signal on the first discard (the only situation in which it is permitted) and do not hold a card which sends the message we want to convey, we must still play in tempo so that we do not in any way suggest to partner that the played card is sending the wrong message. Similarly, if an opponent breaks tempo on his first discard, unauthorized information may have been transmitted. If we are damaged by the break in tempo, we should inform the director.
3. “The Bidding Box” moderated by Josh Donn (p. 40-43).
 - a. Problem 1. The *Bridge Bulletin* auction shows how to get into a good notrump game contract while inviting slam. Even though 5♦ makes, it results in a below average matchpoint score.
 - b. Problem 2. East has various alternatives to reach the top scoring 6♦ contract. The key is for East not to end the auction at 3NT.
 - c. Problem 4. In both the second auction and the *Bridge Bulletin* auction 4♥ is a splinter, showing 4-card (at least) support for partner’s suit and shortness in hearts. This information makes it easy to find the safe 6♣ contract.

4. "Card Play 101" by Phillip Alder (p. 48).
 - a. Deal 1. West's 9♠ opening lead indicates that he holds no spade honors. Therefore, declarer holds the ♠AK. If declarer also held the ♥A, he would not have responded 1N to North's 1♦ bid. Therefore, West has the ♥A. When declarer starts working on diamonds, East must win the first diamond trick with the ♦A and immediately lead the ♥3. Leading a low card suggests partner return the suit. EW will take four hearts and the ♦A to set the contract.
 - b. Deal 2. After the defense has taken all its side suit winners, it's a good idea to give declarer a sluff and a ruff to promote a trump trick for the defense. Normally a ruff / sluff is not a good idea, but in this case a trump promotion is the only chance for another trick.
5. "Parrish the Thought: Five aspects of hand evaluation" by Adam Parrish (p. 49). They are:
 - a. The more shapely your hand the better.
 - b. Aces and kings are undervalued in the 4-3-2-1 system. Queens and jacks are overrated.
 - c. Honors together are better than honors in separate suits.
 - d. Good intermediate cards are useful.
 - e. Be aggressive when you have a good fit with partner. A double fit is even better.
6. "Challenge of the Month" (p. 55, p. 59). There is work to do before pulling trump: lead spades so that the third spade can be ruffed with the ♥J in dummy. This line of play holds the losers to two spades and a club. Making the contract is the idea at IMPS.
7. "Mike's Bridge Lesson: Bidding judgment" by Mike Lawrence (p. 56) Second seat vulnerable preempts show a decent hand. The article shows several reasonable 2♦ second-seat openers and what partner needs to respond to each.
8. "Build Better Bridge: Just don't do it! Finesse, that is – part 5" by Maryann Boardman (p. 58). The first deal is a nice example of a strip and end play.
9. "Boehm on Bridge: Par excellence – part 4" by August Boehm (p. 60). The point of the first deal is to keep the danger hand off lead. The same point is made in Eddie Kantar's "Chalk Talk" on page 57.
10. "Better Bridge with Bergen: Improve your bidding judgement – part 33" by Marty Bergen (p. 61). The better line of play here is to set up the club suit, not to plan on ruffing diamonds.
11. "Test Your Play" by Eddie Kantar (p. 63, p. 65). The second deal is an example of a dummy reversal.

Our Favorites

“Boehm on Bridge: Par excellence – part 4” by August Boehm (p. 60)

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

You, South, opened 3♠ and partner put you in 4♠. The opponents were silent.

West leads the ♥K.

Many deals feature an error at trick one. East the is the danger hand as East can lead through your ♦K. That could cost you three diamonds and a spade for down 1.

The proper play is to let West hold the heart trick. Win the second trick and pull trump, ending in dummy. Play the ♥A and ♣A, getting rid of the two low clubs. Then take a ruffing finesse through East. If the finesse loses, West can't hurt you; you will lose only a diamond, a heart and a club, making the contract.

“Test Your Play” by Eddie Kantar (p. 63, p. 65)

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

This column is in the advanced section but the concept is not advanced.

You are South, declaring 7♠ against a club lead. If you play to make the South hand good, you will need a 3-3 diamond split. That happens 36% of the time.

You can do better than that by playing to make the North hand good. This technique is called a dummy reversal. Playing from the North hand perspective, if spades split 3-2 (which they will do 68% of the time), you can ruff three hearts in South's "dummy."

Play the ♠AJ, drawing two rounds of trump. Using the high red cards for transportation, ruff three hearts

with South's high trump. Then cross to the North hand with the ♣A and play the ♠Q, drawing the last trump.

You will take six spades (five in the South hand and one in the North hand), one heart, three diamonds and three clubs: 13 tricks and the contract.