

April 2024 ACBL Bulletin Notes

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

1. "Partnership building with bid72" by Jan van Cleeff (p. 37). The "Last Train" treatment to find the cold 6♠ contract. We offer a free class on this topic.
2. "The Bidding Box" moderated by Josh Donn (p. 44-47). Problem 3. The *Bridge Bulletin* auction finds the cold 6♣. It takes advantage of East's failure to cue bid the ♦A to deduce that East's answer to 4NT won't include the ♦A. The ♦A is of minimal value opposite West's diamond void. The contestants ended up in either a mediocre 4♥ contract or the suicidal 7♣ contract, missing the ace of trump.
3. "Card Play 101" by Phillip Alder (p. 52). Two deals that demonstrate the necessity of keeping track of high card points.
 - a. Deal 1: Since you need the diamond finesse to work, assume that it does. Place the ♥Q with East.
 - b. Deal 2: You need to find the ♦Q. Based on the first two tricks you know that East has the ♥AK. You must lose the ♣A. Drive out the ♣A to help locate the ♦Q. If East has the ♣A, then West must have the ♦Q. Holding the ♥AK, the ♣A and ♦Q, East would have opened. If West has the ♣A, then you are still on a guess for the ♦Q.
4. "Ask Jerry" by Jerry Helms (p. 59). The best time to be preempt aggressively is in first seat; the worst time is second seat. Being non vul when the opponents are vul is the best time to preempt. A weak-two bid should be headed by at least a queen. The only exception is in third seat non vul vs. vul. Six good spades make a preempt in spades mandatory; do not let four little hearts stop you.
5. "Chalk Talk" by Eddie Kantar (p. 61). A loser-on-loser play guarantees the contract. Make a good decision at trick one: avoid the diamond finesse, which is only a 50% chance.
6. "Build Better Bridge: Just don't do it! Finesse, that is – part 7" by Maryann Boardman (p. 62) In both deals, taking a finesse deprives you of a needed entry to dummy.
7. "Boehm on Bridge: Par excellence – part 6" by August Boehm (p. 64). Two deals: one declarer play, the other defense.
 - a. Board 1: You are declaring 4♠ and looking at four potential losers. Lead the ♣Q from your hand, hoping West has the ♣K. When West wins the ♣K, he will then have to do something useful for you, mostly likely leading trump.
 - b. Board 2: You are defending 6♣. Lead the ♣T, not a low one, to promote a trump in your hand, setting the contract.
8. "Test Your Play" by Eddie Kantar (p. 67, 69). East is the danger hand; he can lead though your ♦K. Duck the first trick to keep West on lead.
9. Consults with the Doctor by Dr. James Marsh Sternberg (p. 71). Raising partner's pre-empt is almost automatic when you have trump support. And, after RHO doubles partner's pre-empt, consider a new suit as both lead-directing and showing support for partner's suit.

Our Favorites

“Partnership building with bid72” by Jan van Cleeff (p. 37)

Key card-asking conventions (Roman Key Card or 1430) are excellent tools, but not always appropriate. We typically do not ask for key cards holding a worthless doubleton. In this deal an artificial “last train” bid enables us to find the slam.

A “last train” bid is the bid just under game in the agreed-upon trump suit. It suggests that partner bid or investigate slam if he holds something extra (good distribution or extra strength).

<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
♠ 9 5	♠ A K Q J 10 4 2
♥ A K Q 9 7	♥ 10 5
♦ K 3 2	♦ A J 9
♣ Q 10 4	♣ 6

	W	E	
		1♠	<i>This is not a 2♣ opener. (1)</i>
<i>Game-forcing; five+ hearts.</i>	2♥	3♠	<i>Sets trump; invites cue bids.</i>
<i>First- or second-round diamond control; denies club control.</i>	4♦	4♥	<i>Artificial “last train” bid; NOT a cue bid. (2)</i>
<i>Extras; willing to look for slam.</i>	4N	5♦	<i>3 or 0 key cards.</i>
<i>Asks for trump Q.</i>	5♥	5N	<i>Confirms trump Q. Denies a king below the trump suit. 5♠ would deny the trump Q.</i>
	6♠		

- (1) This hand does not meet the ACBL rules for a 2♣ opener. Even if it did, we prefer not to bid 2♣ with a powerful one-suited hand. If partner should later make a penalty double, we would have to guess whether to pull it. Partner is expecting more than one winner from us on defense (our spades may not be cashing). On the other hand, if partner has a trump stack, partner may be less than gracious if we pull her penalty double.
- (2) We know we have a club loser. We really want know if partner can cover our red-suit losers; a key card-ask will not give us that information. Spades is the trump suit, so 4♥ is the “last train” bid asking partner to go forward with extras.

Note: the 4♥ bid falls into the “delayed alert” category. It is explained (without the opponents having to ask) when the auction is over.

“Card Play 101” by Phillip Alder (p. 52), Deal 1

	♠ Q2		
	♥ A1054		
	♦ AQJ9		
	♣ 863		
♠ 108754	N	♠ 96	
♥ 76	W — E	♥ Q98	
♦ K85	S	♦ 7643	
♣ AK2		♣ QJ109	
	♠ AKJ3		
	♥ KJ32		
	♦ 102		
	♣ 754		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♥	Pass	3NT
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

West rudely cashes the ♣AK and leads a third club to East’s ♣J. East exits with a spade. We are now booked; we cannot afford to lose any more tricks. Now what?

In order to make the contract, we must assume the diamond finesse is working. We assume West has the ♦K.

We have a two-way finesse for the ♥Q. Given our assumption that West has the ♦K, he cannot also have the ♥Q. If he held both red-suit honors in addition to the ♣AK, he probably would have taken some action (double or overcall) at this turn to bid.

Therefore, we finesse against West for the ♦K and against East for the ♥Q to make the contract.