



PLAY AND LEARN BRIDGE IN A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

ALERT – January 1, 2024



Click [here](#) to access our regular game schedule.

Looking Ahead

- ♥ Three-Chip 99er Game, Saturday, December 30, 9:00 am
- ♥ **The Monday afternoon open BBO game on January 1 has been cancelled - but the evening 499er BBO game is a go.**
- ♥ **New Year's Day 8 is Enough Swiss Teams ENTRIES CLOSE ON SATURDAY!!!**
- ♥ **Cleveland Rock and Roll Regional**, January 3-7, 2024
- ♥ **Toronto Non-Life Master Regional**, January 5-7, 2024
- ♥ **Toronto January Sectional**, January 5-7, 2024
- ♥ **The Friday night open game on January 5 has been cancelled.**
- ♥ Dave Quarrie will be giving a **mini-lesson on Play of the Hand (Suits)** at the Monday morning bridge lab on January 8.
- ♥ Our BBO games during the week of January 8 – 14 will be **NABC Louisville fundraiser games** = double black points, BBO\$1 surcharge
- ♥ Saturday, January 13, [Learn Bridge in a Day](#)
- ♥ Barbara Arthur will be giving a **mini-lesson on Counting Trump** at the Monday morning bridge lab on January 15.
- ♥ Our BBO games during the week of January 15-21 will be **Silver Linings games** = 1.5 times silver points, BBO\$1 surcharge
- ♥ **First Beginners 1 lesson**, Saturday, January 20, 9:30 am – 12:30 pm.
- ♥ Stephen Carpenter will be giving a mini-lesson on **Responding to Pre-empts** at the Monday morning bridge lab on January 22.

NOTE: BBO and the ACBL have mandated that bridge clubs must charge a minimum BBO\$5 entry fee starting January 1, 2024.



The Answer Lady

Contributed by Susan Lawton

As the "The Answer Lady" I have been responding to questions from "newer" players over the past several weeks. A request has been made to share those players' questions and my responses in the Alert, essentially a column for the beginner player! You can write to me at suzan2420@yahoo.ca.

Last week's column provided an example of a hand where South started the bidding with 2♦ and several Responders in North bid immediately game, i.e., 2♦-4♦. Responder had spade support with three spades and 17 HCPs.

Question

One reader asked 'how does Responder know they can bid to game after partner opens with a weak two. What should Responder's hand look like?

Answer

Responder knows the shape and point count is in Opener's hand exactly after their pre-emptive bid (usually between 6-10 points). Opener cannot imagine Responder's hand until a further bid is made. For this reason, Responder becomes the captain of the ship and is in the best position to place the contract. Opener will not bid again unless Responder makes a forcing bid. Opener has nothing more to say.

Several bridge experts provide parameters on dealing with weak bids in the Responder role. They suggest that Responder examine their hand evaluating for: HCPs; overall hand strength; trump support for Opener's suit; hand shape, etc. If Responder has an opening hand or better, there is the possibility of a game. Should it be played in Opener's suit or perhaps somewhere else?

Mel Colchamiro's book *How You Can Play Like an Expert (Without Having to be One)* has a complete chapter (chapter 7, pp: 59-76) about what Responder should do when they have trump support. Mel's suggestion is to use his Rule of 17. After partner opens with a weak two, Responder should try for game **only** if they have at least 17 Mel's points. Mel gives you one point for each HCP in Responder's hand and one point for each card in partner's long suit.

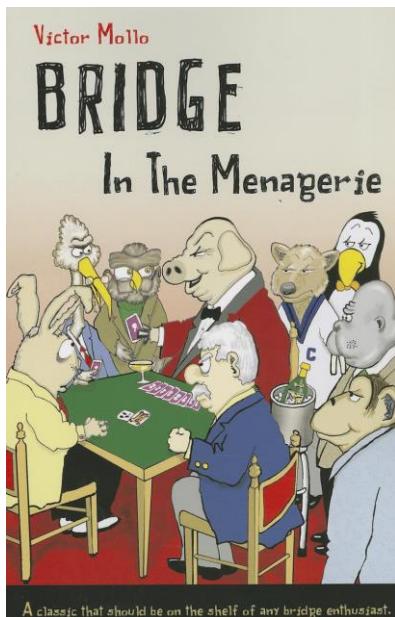
Mel's Rule of 17

HCP
plus # of cards in Partner's Long Suit
if 17 or more = try for game
if 16 or less = pass or raise partner

In the hand below, after East began the beginning with 2♠, West bid 4♠. They have 15 HCPs and three-card support for partner's spade suit for a total of 18 Mel's points. Responder has the Mel's Rule of 17 and can comfortably bid game.

D	5	N	♠ A2 ♥ AJ964 ♦ Q92 ♣ 943	W N E S P 2♠ P 4♠ P P P
W	♠ Q73 ♥ K108 ♦ AK1084 ♣ K5			E ♠ KJ10985 ♥ 732 ♦ 3 ♣ A76
S	♠ 64 ♥ Q5 ♦ J765 ♣ QJ1082			4♠ E NS: 0 EW: 0





A classic that should be on the shelf of any bridge enthusiast.

Book Review

Bridge in the Menagerie by Victor Mollo is a collection of light-hearted stories set in an imaginary faraway bridge club. The standard of kibitzing at this club is unusually high. For example, Oscar the Owl, the club's senior kibitzer, "could make intelligent remarks even after seeing all four hands and he had the rare gift of maintaining silence for hours on end, even when he was awake." On one occasion, he observed: "Curious hand: both sides can make four hearts!"

Unlike at our own bridge club, the players at that club are very quirky. Here are a few of them.

- **Hideous Hog:** He asks his partners to make him declarer, assuring them it's in their own best interests. Next to winning, the Hog's greatest pleasure is to see his opponents lose.
- **Rueful Rabbit:** "Perhaps the worst player in the western hemisphere and certainly the luckiest." His constant refrain is: "One gets used to abuse. It's waiting for it that is so trying."
- **The Doctor:** "A cold precise logician who excels in the post mortem, especially after rigor mortis has set in. The doctor brings to the bridge table that gift for lightning analysis which enables him to tell at once why a patient has departed – and how he could have been saved."

This book is highly entertaining and at the same time quite instructive. For example, you will learn how to eat one of your cards when you are in danger of losing the rubber.

Bridge in the Menagerie is one of the many books (bridge and otherwise) located in our tastefully-decorated zebra lounge. We also have lots of jigsaw puzzles.

Please feel free to borrow anything – and likewise feel free to add to our collection. Everything is on the honour system.

And if you really like one of our books or puzzles, please feel free to submit your own review.....



Bean There Done That

Contributed by Steve Allen, Treasurer (GrandRiverBridgeClubTreasurer@gmail.com)

(Mr. Bean watched A Christmas Carol and the Grinch movies over the holidays. He's such a suck for movies that make him feel good inside. Or perhaps it's the Baileys during commercials). Every so often, GRBC runs a special game where the ACBL awards red or silver or gold or aluminum master points to the games' winners. You know these games as NAP, Charity Week, etc. I guess it must cost ACBL more to manufacture these coloured MPs because they slap a surcharge on us. It is usually **one dollar per player** (in \$US). GRBC passes this surcharge on to our players' entry fees to avoid taking a loss on the surcharge. It is usually **two dollars per player** (in \$US for BBO, in \$CDN for F2F).

You might think that GRBC is taking advantage of your lust for Christmas-coloured MPs and ACBL's surcharge to further tax you on these special games. Well, that would be true! Assuming a 1.35 currency exchange rate for \$US, we were getting extra income per player of \$1.35CDN from BBO games and \$0.65 from F2F games.

ACBL will still apply that surcharge to us in 2024 ... but GRBC will add only **one dollar per player** to the entry fee (in \$US for BBO, in \$CDN for F2F), resulting in extra income per player of \$0.35 from BBO games and negative \$0.35 from F2F games.

Happy New Year!



Time You Learned our Lessons!

Continuing

- **Newcomer bridge labs** most Monday mornings, 9:00 am – 11:30 am, except on holiday Mondays. Upcoming mini-lessons include **Play of the Hand (Suits) Part 2** with Dave Quarrie on January 8, **Counting Trumps** with Barbara Arthur on January 15, **Responding to Pre-Empts** with Stephen Carpenter on January 22 and **Filling Out Your Convention Card** with Malkin Howes on January 29. NO EXTRA CHARGE

Our bridge labs are a great place to make new friends and recruit new partners, as well as get better at our game!

Learn Bridge in a Day?

Instructor: Stephen Carpenter

Date: Saturday, January 13, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Cost: \$35

Venue: In the teaching room at our club

Current Enrollment: 15

Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Beginner 1 Lessons

Instructor: Sue Moses

Dates: Saturday, January 20, 27, February 3, 10, & 17

Cost: \$85 (includes the cost of the text)

Venue: In the teaching room at our club

Current Enrollment: 5

Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Starting Signals – Attitude

Instructor: Neil Jeffrey

Cost: \$20 for members and \$25 for non-members

Location: In person in the teaching room of the Grand River Bridge Club

Level: **Novice**

Date & Time: Tuesday, January 30, 6:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

We Are All Ears

Because of the low enrollment for our autumn 2023 lessons for advancing players, we have cut back drastically on the number of lessons we will be offering in winter 2024 (not counting the mini-lessons at the Monday morning bridge labs). Currently, we have only one winter workshop (**Starting Signals – Attitude** by Neil Jeffrey) and one module (**Pre-emptive Twos, Including the Responses** by Jack Cole). And we are trying to convince Dianne Aves to offer a lesson on counting. And that's it!

If you and a bunch of your friends would like a lesson or lessons on a particular topic, please tell our lesson lead Malkin Howes, mdare@sympatico.ca, 519-884-3166.

FOR OPEN PLAYERS



Dear David

Having a Fit

It is a well-known precept in bridge that a four-four major-suit fit will often play a trick better than a five-three major-suit fit because the extra length in the five-card suit will often allow you to discard losers on the fourth and fifth rounds of the suit. The same holds true, of course if you are deciding between four-four or five-three minor-suit fits.

South Deals	♠ Q 9 4
E-W Vul	♥ 10 9 7
	♦ Q 2
	♣ K J 6 3 2
♠ J 10 5	♠ K 8 6 3 2
♥ A K J 6	♥ Q 8 5 3
♦ K 10 9 6	♦ A J 3
♣ Q 10	♣ 7
	♠ A 7
	♥ 4 2
	♦ 8 7 5 4
	♣ A 9 8 5 4

West	North	East	South
			Pass
1 ♦	Pass	1 ♠	Pass
1 N	Pass	2 ♣ ¹	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	3 ♠ ²	Pass
4 ♠	All pass		

1. new minor forcing
2. invitational

*Some players play that showing four cards in the other major is their first responsibility, but I find that method to be flawed in two ways. Responder is most often only interested in finding the eight-card fit. If you respond 2♥ and partner was interested only in spades, you might get too high when opener had 12 HCP and responder had 10. The second reason is that it gives the opening leader information about how to defend. As I have outlined above, the heart fit will never get lost if you show your immediate fit first.

This was the auction that occurred. Declarer had a club loser and two sure losers in spades, so it was incumbent on him to find the ♦Q. Alas, he got it wrong—down one. Had they played in their four-four heart, the long spade suit would allow two discards of diamonds from the West hand and 4♥ would make.

The 2♣ bid is an artificial ask for three cards in partner's major or four cards in the other major. With both (as in this case), priority is given to showing partner's suit (spades in this case)*. Given this agreement, how can they find the superior heart fit? Another popular convention that most players use is Help Suit Game Try (HSGT). After uncovering a spade fit, a new suit is asking for help in the new suit in order to get to game. The help suit might be only a three-card suit, such as Kxx, or Qxx, or Jxx, or even xxx.

The rules are a little different if the HSGT is in the other major. Now the possibility of playing in a four-four major fit exists. If East had made an invitational HSGT by bidding 3♥ and partner is going to accept the game try (which he will on this hand because he has a maximum point-count with three tens), why not bid 4♥? If East has only three hearts, he will return to spades. If he has four hearts, he will pass in the hope that discards on the spades may be helpful.



No. 129

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ AKJ43
♥ A876
♦ AQ7
♣ 6

♠ Q62
♥ J1093
♦ 1054
♣ A92

West	North	East	South
	4♣	Dbl	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	5♣
5♦	Pass	5♠	All pass

I was sitting South defending a 5♠ contract and my partner led the ♣K. If you were in my shoes, what would you do now?

SOLUTION

If West has a club, you have two sure tricks: a club and your ♠Q. To defeat the contract, you are going to need one more trick. Where can it come from? Let's do a little analysis.

- Obviously, nothing more in the black suits - we can rule them out right away.
- What about the diamond suit? Do you remember that Declarer bid diamonds at the five level, meaning that he has a good diamond suit? So, it is highly unlikely that there will be any joy for your side in diamonds.
- Ergo, if there is a third trick for your side, it must be in hearts. Obviously, Declarer doesn't have a slow loser in hearts (dummy has the ♥A), but it's possible that you could develop a trick in this suit. In a perfect world, this would be the heart suit layout.

♠		♠
	♥ Kxx	
	♦	
	♣	
♠		♠
♥ Qx		♥ A876
♦		♦
♣		♣
	N	
	W E	
	S	

♠
♥ J1093
♦
♣

Since a slow heart loser is your only chance, you might as well make this assumption. If this is not the layout, don't blame me 😊. Furthermore, you need to strike while the iron is hot - before Declarer can set up his diamonds and discard dummy's heart losers on them.

Proceeding logically, if you let your partner hold the first trick, can you reasonably expect him to lead hearts? No - for two reasons. First, he doesn't know the heart situation, and even if he guesses to lead a heart he would have to lead away from his king - which gives up a trick.

Clearly, not only must the heart suit be attacked right away, but also the lead must come from you. So, the correct play at Trick 1 is to overtake your partner's ♣K with your ♣A and waste no time putting your ♥J on the table at Trick 2.

Here is the complete deal.

♠ 7			
♥ K52			
♦ 2			
♣ KQJ107543			
♠ 10985	N		♠ AKJ43
♥ Q4	W	E	♥ A876
♦ KJ9863		S	♦ AQ7
♣ 8			♣ 6
♠ Q62			
♥ J1093			
♦ 1054			
♣ A92			

Declarer has to take dummy's ♥A at Trick 2 (otherwise, his contract is doomed for certain), and as soon as he does that his slow heart loser becomes a fast heart loser. When you get in with your ♠Q, you will lead a heart to your partner's king for down one.

This is a rather unusual application of the bridge maxim that aces are meant to take kings.



Top Master Point Earners at our Club

Contributed by Allen Pengelly

This table lists the individuals who have earned the most master points at our club in each of three master point bands since the beginning of November.

Open Players			499er Players			99er Players		
	Name	MP		Name	MP		Name	MP
1	David Baker	20.77	1	Jim Dalgliesh	14.32	1	Brian Gaber	7.75
2	Cindy Mahn	16.89	2	Lori Cole	10.41	2	Sheila Charters	7.15
3	Malkin Howes	15.07	3	John Kip	10.12	3	Debbie Miethig	7.00
4	Stephen Young	15.06	3	Cheryl Kip	10.12	4	Peter Gaasenbeek	5.80
5	Mike Peng	14.94	5	Kevin Latter	9.84	5	Stu Cowan	5.43
6	Moira Hollingsworth	13.89	6	Judy Beauchamp	9.52	6	Andrew Widdis	5.23
7	Ted Boyd	12.99	7	Regina Williams	8.94	7	Don Slowinski	5.19
8	Edith Ferber	12.41	7	Denis Williams	8.94	8	Louise Dawdy	4.78
9	Neil Coburn	10.84	9	Jack Cole	8.31	9	Paul Raymond	4.74
10	Bonnie Kains	9.67	10	Martin Jones	8.04	10	Russel Kerr	4.57
11	Suzanne Edwards	9.39	11	Rick Arthur	7.83	11	George Rybiak	4.17
12	Neil Jeffrey	9.07	12	Nancy Cattanach	7.18	12	Audrey Cook	4.05
13	Pat McMillan	9.04	13	Glenn Mockford	6.84	13	John Aldridge	3.97
14	Dave Quarrie	8.79	14	Cheryl White	6.72	14	Ben Cornell	3.93
15	John Hanemaayer	8.44	15	Lynda Burnett	6.65	15	JP Fraesso	3.92
16	Margot Stockie	8.19	16	Bob Gilck	6.58	16	Sharon Nesbitt	3.70
17	Kathy Russell	7.27	17	Lissa Lowes	6.57	17	Pat Northey	3.60
17	Bob Griffiths	7.27	18	Elinor Girouard	6.41	18	Jane Wilson	3.51
19	Sharon King	6.64	19	Tony Verhoeven	5.88	19	Larry Brooks	3.40
20	Adriaan Kempe	6.53	20	Bob Livermore	5.58	20	Richard Rybiak	3.35
21	Liz McDowell	6.44	21	Janice Pengelly	5.57	21	Pat Gascho	3.23
22	Steve Carpenter	6.37	22	Renate Boucher	5.52	22	Sandra Kendall	3.16
23	Dave Embury	6.24	23	Molly Worden	5.45	23	Phil DeMontigny	2.76
24	Paul Latimer	6.19	24	Judy Widdecombe	5.13	24	Carla Laubach	2.70
25	Dianne Aves	6.07	25	David Dennis	5.01	25	Jeannie Leforge	2.57

If you would like to play in a particular game but lack a partner that day, you can either:

- For both online and f2f games, log on to [Pianola](#), click on Partner Finder, and create a Partner Finder advert. This needs to be done at least a few hours in advance of the game. *When you use Partner Finder, it will allow folks to see your contact information. If you have posted a Partner Finder ad, kindly remember to check your phone and email and, when you've found a partner, delete your ad. Someone who replied to your ad may be waiting for a response.*
- For online games only, log in to the game in question and register yourself on the Partnership Desk tab (or look to see if someone else has already registered there).

If you are looking for a regular partner, contact [Joan Slover](#), our membership lead. Please let her know what sort of game/partner you are interested in – your playing level, your available time slots, F2F and/or online, and any other pertinent information.

We have fun in **spades**.
We play with all our **hearts**.
We treat our members like **diamonds**.
Happy New Year from our **club**.