

The Declarer

- nor shall my sword sleep in my hand

Welcome to the first edition of The Declarer. The plan is to distribute it quarterly. I hope you find it interesting and informative. A big thank you to all those who submitted articles for this edition, your contributions are greatly appreciated.

This is a great opportunity to have a say, so please let me know your thoughts and send lots of letters for publication. If there is something you would like to see in The Declarer or if you have a question on bidding or play, send me an email and I can ask our club experts. Your comments and letters for publication are all welcome and can be emailed to me at sue.kay@xtra.co.nz or sent to the Secretary, hastingsbridgeclub@xtra.co.nz

After reading this you probably realise, I could do with some layout help. If you have any skills with electronic publishing, I'd love to hear from you.

Happy Bridging Sue Kay

AGM

The AGM was held on 16th Nov. Thirty-seven members attended and your new committee was elected. Trish Murphy – President; Mairi Fitzsimons – Secretary; Bev Penny – Treasurer; Committee: Frances Flynn; Julie Soloman; Norma Unverric; Owen Trimmer; Jane Harding; Bernie Schroder; John Bullot; Humphry Symons – Facilitator.



Mairi Fitzsimons proposed a motion that All people who enter the Hastings Bridge Club shall be fully vaccinated against Covid 19. There was some discussion around how it will be implemented but the motion was passed by a large majority.

Trophies were awarded as follows, well done to all these players.

MONDAY

Championship Pairs Trish Murphy/ Mary Simonsen
Ladder Graham Potter

WEDNESDAY

Championship Pairs Sue Kay/Dennis Apperley
Teams of Four Carol Edwards; Chris Moffett; Sue Whitten; Greg Whitten

Intermediate Ladder Carol Edwards
Most Improved Intermediate Christine Moffett

THURSDAY

Top Guns. Gideon Du Preez/Owen Trimmer

FRIDAY

Aggregate. Frances Flynn

And that was how the argument began... by Gerry Palmer

Somewhere in Europe, late August 1939.

Things had been going well this session for Adolf and Benito, but now they met the formidable pairing of Winston and Franklin.

West (Adolf) is the dealer and no-one is vulnerable.

Dealer: West Vul: Nil	Winston 6 Q843 AK104 AKQJ	
Adolf J7542 --- 76 1087543		Benito 83 AKJ976 J85 96
	Franklin AKQ109 1052 Q932 2	

Adolf decides, as usual, to go on the offensive and opens 2S, showing a weak (!) hand with 5 spades and 4 or more of a minor. "What can go wrong?", he thinks, "we are invulnerable". Winston (North) doubles of course, and Benito passes thinking "At least I have 2S for partner".

Franklin (South) can hardly believe his luck and passes.

At this point Adolf, not used to losing, tries 3C. After all, he has six of them. Winston of course doubles again (for penalties now obviously) holding the top four trumps. At this point Benito makes his contribution; 3H "I have a decent six card suit".

Franklin doesn't care, or even look at his hand, he doubles letting partner know that he has the goods. This would be bad, but nowhere near as bad as what happened next. Adolf panics with his heart void and bids 4C. The final contract is 4C doubled.

How many tricks do you think this should make?

Easy, North starts by cashing his 4 top trumps and then switches to a diamond. West ruffs the third round and at this point holds...

S J7542

C 10

He leads a spade, won cheaply by south who leads his last diamond which forces west to ruff with his last trump. South now gets the last 4 tricks in spades (he has AKQ10 left).

Eight light for -2000!

Adolf is instantly on the attack, "Why did you bid 3H?". Benito who has done nothing wrong (on this deal anyway) laments, "somehow I just knew this was all going to be my fault".

"That's it" snaps Adolf, "I've had enough, I'm going on my Grand Tour of Europe soon, first stop Poland."

This is an actual hand. I was South. How many times have you taken 2000 off the opponents?

The Directors Cut

THE 2 CLUB OPENING BID

Recently, at Club sessions, there have been situations where players have not been able to provide an accurate description of their partnership agreement when the 2 Club opening bid has been made. Further, there have been instances of the bid being used in an illegal way! Let's try and tidy this up.

Firstly, the bid can mean whatever the partnership wants it to mean. The most common meaning is that the opener is making a "game force" bid. In other words, the partnership won't stop bidding until game is reached. If this is what your partnership agreement is, then there is no need to alert the bid. If your agreement differs from this in any way, the bid must be alerted, and you must be able to fully explain your partnership agreement.

We need to also explain when a "game force" bid can be used. This issue has recently been addressed by the Chief Director of New Zealand Bridge. Firstly, a balanced or semi balance hand (no void or singleton) of 23 or more high card points qualifies.

But sometimes we have very strong hands that are distributional and contain less than 23 high card points. When can we open these hands 2C? The new ruling is that these hands can only be opened as 2C "game force" if the number of high card points plus the number of cards in the two longest suits add up to 29 or more e.g., it is not permitted to open 2C "game force" with 17 high card points and a 6/5/1/1 shape but 16 high card points and an 8/5/0/0 shape will meet the requirements.

Still confused? Your Club Directors will be happy to discuss.

Leads Against No-Trumps by Arthur Bennett

(For the full article, see the Hastings Bridge Club Website.)

People play in no-trumps because they have failed to find a fit in a major suit. Therefore, it is generally always better to lead a major than a minor. There is a motto floating around, that you should lead "4th from your longest and strongest". This advice can be misleading. Just because you have 5 clubs or 5 diamonds, does not mean that you should lead that suit. It is still much more important that you look for a major suit to lead. As for that 4th highest idea, to tell partner precisely how many cards you have in the suit, believe me, declarer will be much more interested in that information. You should only make three sorts of leads: An honour card from a sequence; a highish rag saying that this is not a suit you have any interest in (HIGH DENIGHS); and your lowest card in the suit saying that this is a suit you are vitally interested in (LOW SHOWS).

Remember that you have a partner. It could well be that no 4+ card suit in your hand has any prospect at all of defeating declarer. Listen to the bidding and work out who has the best hand, you, or your partner. A good defensive hand has an ESTABLISHABLE SUIT and a RE-ENTRY. ♠A76 ♥KQJT5 ♦T75 ♣42 has both. ♠876 ♥KJ654 ♦T75 ♣42 has neither. So, if you are weak with no establishable suit, don't lead your best suit, but what you hope is your partner's best suit. Four cards to just one honour is generally a very poor choice of lead.

Consider this hand: ♠T93 ♥AQT4 ♦K873 ♣83. I would lead the ten of spades every day. The highish rag (HIGH DENIGHS) denies any interest in the spade suit, although you could serendipitously have hit a 5-card spade suit in your partner's hand! It carries one simple message: "LOOK ELSEWHERE!". Your partner has to look at his own hand and at dummy and work out which suit you would like him to return, and you hope he guesses you have hearts.

Overheard at the Bridge Table -

"Sorry partner, I wanted to open 1NT but I had 2 doubletons, then I realised they were both in the same suit!"

What Happened at your table? by Gerry Palmer

Recently, on Monday (Jan 10) there were two consecutive deals I thought interesting, and perhaps instructive, for different reasons.

Very broadly there are two types of auctions, constructive and competitive. These were examples of each type.

The Constructive Auction

Board 21 Dealer: North Vul: NS	KQ6542 A62 762 K	
103 KJ103 84 J8652		7 Q987 KQJ3 9743
	AJ98 54 A1095 AQ10	

Board 21 is an example of a purely constructive auction. When there is no competition the goal in bidding is to find the best contract, while giving as little useful information to the opponents as possible. A natural auction is a combination of *conversation* – you attempt to exchange useful information, and *judgement* – you try to decide how good your hand is *in the context of the bidding* so far. The result, hopefully, is that at some point one of you will have a good idea of the final contract.

What can North/South make here? Count the tricks, one of the problems with having the makeables come up on the tablets is that newer players never learn how to estimate the possibilities on a board by *looking at it*. We have 6S tricks, 1H, 1D and 3C and one H Ruff in the short trump hand. That is 12 tricks. What about losers? Well after drawing trumps you can throw two diamonds on the AQ of clubs. Then you lose a heart before ruffing the last heart. So, slam is easy, you don't need any suits to break or any finesses, and yet only three out of ten pairs managed to bid it.

What should happen?

Here, north starts with one spade. What is south to do? For me, one of the key points here is that it is vital on this sort of hand to be able to firstly tell partner that you are playing in spades and secondly indicate some idea of your strength. All experienced pairs have a bid set aside to show four or more spades and a good hand, often 2NT. These pairs do NOT bid 4S, because that is almost universally reserved for a weak hand with five or more spades. Even if a bid of 4S means "I think we can make 4S", it will not work here because partner (North) will have no idea that we might be able to make slam; 4S will be the final contract.

So, some Souths will bid 2NT (showing spades). The spotlight is really on North who, with a bad hand, should bid spades at the lowest possible level. Here however, North needs to realise that they do NOT have a bad hand. They have six spades which is good (one more trick straight away) and they have Aces and Kings and a shortage. On the other hand they have a stiff (singleton) King which will be wasted unless partner has some points in clubs. All in all though North could easily be worse, and should bid 3C to say to partner "I have a better hand than I might have had and I have a control in clubs".

It is all easy from here, South is now only worried about hearts (having two small), so bids 3D to show a control in diamonds. North bids 3H to show the heart control and at this point south asks for Aces (or preferably Key Cards) and bids slam. If South had a weaker hand they would bid the same way but not ask for aces; having already shown their hand they would leave any further move to North. On another day if North was a bit stronger (say with the King of hearts) they would miss the grand. There are ways around that, but that is a story for another day, and anyway not worth worrying about.

The Competitive Auction

Board 22 Dealer: East Vul: EW	A108632 Q 9 J10942	
QJ K KJ10742 Q875		5 J109754 A54 AK6
	K974 A8632 Q83 3	

About half of all deals result in a competitive auction, and this board is a typical example. There were a variety of final contracts, ranging from 4S North/South to 4H East/West. This is typical of competitive auctions where the goal in the bidding is not really to find the perfect contract. Often just getting a plus score results in an above average score even if the contract is not the best.

How did this one go at your table? At our table East opened 1H of course. I was South and had an obvious pass. West bids 2D and the spotlight again falls on North. Do you bid with only 7 points when you know that the opponents have the majority of the high card points?

There are two reasons why you should bid. Firstly, you are not vulnerable while the opponents are. If you go down it will not cost much, and there is a very real chance that they can make a game and score 600. Secondly you have a two suited hand. "Six-five come alive!" is the saying. You may not be aware that two suited hands are the most powerful type of hand you can get – provided you find a fit.

What can North/South make here in spades? If you draw trumps you can ruff two clubs, losing the first round of clubs and the fourth round, but the fifth club in the North hand will be good. You score six spades, the Ace of hearts, one club and two club ruffs for a total of ten tricks. You don't even use the two Queens, so you would make 4S without them holding a combined total of 12 points!

At our table North bid 2S, East raised diamonds to 3D and I raised spades to 3S and that was the end of it. Probably I should have bid 4S, but even three making 4 is an above average score, which is the sort of thing that happens on competitive hands. Interestingly 4H will often make by East/West despite the 5-1 trump break, and again that is the sort of thing that can happen on a competitive deal.

If you only take one thing away, it is **look at the vulnerability**. It is important on so many deals and completely crucial in competitive deals.

A Hand to Remember - The Sword of Damocles by Mairi Fitzsimons

We all know that Bridge is the kind of game where the sword of Damocles is always hovering just above your head, and will inevitably descend, just when you are wallowing in your perceived success. Usually, such a grim end could have been avoided if you had just put a little more effort into thinking about what you were doing instead of rejoicing prematurely.

I suffered such a fate some years ago. It was the early days of the HB Congress when the event was held at the DB Te Mata Hotel (now Mary Doyle). Brian and I were playing in the Open Pairs. Our opponents were the very experienced pair of grand masters, Wayne Burrows and Sue Wheal. They bid their way to 6NT. With two aces in my hand, I excitedly doubled. I was on lead so I knew that we were about to get a top board from a pair who usually demolished us. As I doubled, Sue Wheal began apologizing to her partner and I had not yet led a card! 'Wow!' I thought, 'This is going to be good.'

Confidently I led out my ace of hearts. Partner played an encouraging card in response to my lead. 'Ha-ha!' I thought, 'I can take this contract more than one light.' So I led another heart knowing that my ace of diamond would be another trick. Sue Wheal, the declarer snorted appreciatively and won the next 12 tricks. She did not need my ace of diamonds. Declarer had two running suits! Everyone at the table started laughing whilst I slowly removed the sword from my head as I laid my ace of diamonds on declarer's twelfth trick, the 2 of clubs!

The worst part of the debacle has been that Wayne Burrows and of course my dear partner Brian have **NEVER** let me forget this hand. In fact, Wayne wrote it up in the kiwi bridge face book page about a year ago and that was 20 years after it happened. The only good thing to come out of the episode is that I have never made that mistake again.

Thank you for this Mairi, it just goes to show that if you play or defend well, no-one remembers; but if you play badly, no-one forgets! - Ed

Save the date...

- **25th Jan Tuesday 5.30pm Real Bridge Training**
- **30th Jan Real Bridge Sessions start 7pm**
- **5th Feb Napier Restricted Pairs**
- **6th Feb Havelock North Charity Pairs**
- **Tuesday afternoons from 8th Feb Tuesday 1.30pm Beginner and Novice sessions start, all players are welcome to come along and help.**
- **13th Feb Taradale Intermediate Pairs**
- **19th Mar Taradale Lawson Jugs Pairs**
- **26th Mar Hastings Open Teams**
- **2nd April Waipukurau Open Pairs**
- **9th April Napier Intermediate Pairs**
- **9th April Dannevirke Open Pairs**
- **25th April Hastings ANZAC Charity Pairs**
- **30th April Hastings Junior Pairs**
- **Mini Bridge starts on Thursday 17th Feb Thursday 7pm at the Hastings club, if you know anyone who may be interested in having a go at Bridge, get them to come along. Mini Bridge is a great way to start to learn this wonderful game and is designed to get learners actually playing hands without the pressure of competitive auctions.**

