

WESTERN CAPE BRIDGE UNION NEWSLETTER



Edition 11
December 2020

Editor: Shirley Kaminer
newsletter@wcbridge.co.za

Message from the Editor

Dear Bridge Players

We are so fortunate to be able to continue our favourite pastime online within the safety of our homes.

And we have a veritable feast of options – daily online tournaments for pairs as well as team options a few times a week. Over and above that, we have been able to participate in online national tournaments without boarding a plane to another SA city. The week-long SAWBA Congress in October was a huge success, with many more participants than usual, and we had the national SABF inter-club tournament in November, once again, with large participation.

And more yet to come! The Festival of Bridge, which is normally held at the Bridge Centre in Green Point, is also taking place online in December and details are contained in this newsletter. A huge “thank you” to the organisers of all these events!

Regrettably, there have been a number of bereavements in the bridge community over the last few months – of bridge players and family members of bridge players – and we would like to extend sincere condolences to everyone concerned. One of these was someone of a very young age – Malcolm Siegel, who passed away a few days after his 40th birthday and who was already making an impact behind the scenes in the use of technology for bridge as well as being a rising bridge star. Tim Cope and Diniar Minwalla pay tribute to him in this newsletter.

Our sincere thanks to Warwick Wealth for their continuous support. Once again, we have valuable contributions from our regular bridge experts . . . Tim Cope’s first article in a new series “The Unseen Hand” will guide us on visualisation techniques; Diniar Minwalla has given us an interesting perspective on trial bids; and the article by Eckhard Böhlke and Kathryn Herz gives guidance on defensive strategies in tournaments – they all enlighten us with their shared knowledge and experience. We are indeed very fortunate!

Keep well, stay safe and happy reading!

Shirley Kaminer

Chairman's Message

Dear Fellow Bridgeplayer

We come towards the end of an extraordinary year. Certainly, this time last year, we did not know what was about to happen. When Steve Bunker, who is still a major asset to our bridge community, announced that he would be leaving for overseas, I agreed to return for one more year in the Chair – my 23rd on the WCBU. I had no idea how many changes would be necessary to keep the game alive for our community. But, thanks to the magnificent input from my fellow committee members and many other volunteers, and largely due to your support, we have actually used the game as a partial panacea to lockdown. From small beginnings of one session a week on BBO, we now have daily events up and down the country to help stimulate our brains and keep us occupied. In addition, we have had formal team events and informal matches run by a dedicated group of people – too many to mention here but I shall acknowledge them individually in my closing Chairman's report.

We still have one more month of the year to go, and this is a very important one in the Western Cape calendar. Traditionally, December has always been the month of our flagship event, the Cape Festival. This year we are forced to hold the event online, and I really hope that you will all participate in what will be a professionally run, fun tournament, with great prizes for all categories of players. Please enter online if you have not done so already, as the closing date for entries is fast approaching.

In respect of our regular BBO tournaments, these will obviously not take place during the days of the Festival. Please note that we will also not be holding our daily events on the 24th, 25th and 26th of December, nor 31st December and 1st of January, but we will be open for business on all other days. This will give both you and our tournament directors a chance to enjoy the festive season. For anyone suffering withdrawal symptoms during that period, I am sure that there will be other games available on BBO.

This has also been a very sad year for bridge. We pay our respects to Naomi Solomons, the doyenne of Eastern Cape bridge, who passed away in November. We have great memories of the P.E. mini congresses that she ran with great enthusiasm for many years.

For us in Cape Town, the major tragedy of the year was the passing of Malcolm Siegel, who had already given so much to the game, and we hoped would be a shining beacon for its future, both as an organiser and a player. When I first met Malcolm, he seemed overconfident and overenthusiastic. I was not sure whether I could deal with such an individual. Over the passage of time, I found that his confidence was well-founded, and his enthusiasm inspiring. When you add to this his wonderful sense of humour and his fellowship for us all, he was someone we all had the privilege to meet. The WCBU will attempt to develop a bursary for a bridge playing student in his honour. He will be much missed.

The big question on everyone's mind will be the timing of the re-opening of face-to-face bridge clubs. We can make no promises, but we will endeavour to do this as soon as we can, but soon does not mean recklessly. There is a potential threat of a second wave of the virus hitting the Western Cape, and until we have a degree of certainty, we will not endanger our bridge playing community. Even when we do re-open, there will have to be strict protocols in place to ensure the safety of all, and we may even have to limit the number of players on any specific day.

The exact timing of the above will be in the hands of your new committee, who will be elected early next year. All I can promise is that the transition will be smoother than the Biden/Trump saga! Many key individuals have emerged in these torrid times, and I for one look forward to seeing these people take the game ahead.

This will be my last contribution as Chairman to the newsletter. A special thank you to Shirley Kaminer for putting it all together, and the many kind comments I have received from you, the readers. I look forward to seeing you all at the bridge table sometime next year.

Yours in bridge

Tim Cope - Chairman WCBU



Trial Bids

by Diniar Minwalla

We all know that the number of high card points required to make game in a suit contract is approximately 25 points for the major suit game (4 Hearts or 4 Spades), and 28/29 points for the minor suit game (5 Clubs or 5 Diamonds). Sometimes, however, game can be made with less than the minimum number of points required, provided the points are located in the correct suits. We may have often had this conversation with our partner . . . “we made game but we could not bid it because we did not have enough points”.

An important concept to note is that points are not as valuable as fits. It is the fits that take tricks. Trial bids are used when a fit has been located, and when we know that the combined point count of the two hands is insufficient to make game, but that the possibility of game still exists, provided the points are located in the correct suits. Let’s look at the ways in which trial bids can be used to achieve this objective.

1. Major suit agreement at the 2 level

When a major suit is agreed at the 2 level, a new suit is a TRIAL BID.

There are 2 types of trial bids in these situations:

A. Long Suit Trial Bids

Supposing the bidding goes as follows:

1S - 2S
?

As opener and responder, we hold the following hands:

| <u>Opener</u> | <u>Responder</u> |
|---------------|------------------|
| AQJXX | KXXX |
| XX | XXXX |
| AX | XXX |
| AXXX | KX |

We can now bid 3C as a long suit trial bid, asking partner if he can help to take care of our losers in the club suit. This can be either in the form of honour cards in clubs, or shortage in clubs. In the latter case, the club losers could be taken care of by trumping.

Responder’s hand in the above example looks good to accept the game try by bidding 4S. The king of clubs provides help in the form of an honour, and the doubleton club assists in the form of allowing opener to trump his club losers in dummy. Ten tricks will result with as few as 21 combined high card points.

Switch responder's club and diamond holding, and the hand becomes much less attractive, offering no play for ten tricks. Responder should sign off in 3S.

Note that in order to make a long suit game try, opener must have three or more cards in the suit in which help is being sought, together with two or three losers in that suit.

B. Short Suit Trial Bids

Playing short suit trial bids, a new suit after a major suit is agreed at the two level shows shortage (singleton or void). Using short suit trial bids, the opener would like help from responder in taking care of his losers in suits other than the short suit, again in the form of honour cards or shortage in those suits.

EXAMPLE

1S - 2S
3D

As opener and responder, we hold the following hands:

| <u>Opener</u> | <u>Responder</u> |
|---------------|------------------|
| AQJXX | KXXX |
| KJXX | QX |
| X | XXXX |
| KJX | QXX |

Responder should accept the short suit trial bid by jumping to 4S. The queen of hearts and clubs are useful in plugging the holes in those suits that exist in opener's hand, and 4 trumps with the king is also a good feature.

Again, switch the minor suit holdings in responder's hand, and game is no longer so attractive, the queen of diamonds becoming a wasted 2 points, and no help available in the club suit.

Using short suit trial bids, we can use 2NT as a trial bid when we have no shortage (typically, 16-17, 5-4-2-2, or perhaps 6-3-2-2).

Fine Tuning the valuation

We can choose to incorporate either short suit or long suit trial bids into our bidding system. Either one could be more efficient on any given hand. Whichever one we choose to use, we can fine tune the responder's bids as follows:

Using Long Suit Trial Bids:

1S - 2S

3C

Responder

- signs off in 3S with minimum, and no help to take care of club losers in opener's hand;
- bids 4S with better than minimum, and help in clubs;
- bids a new suit below the level of 3S (3D or 3H) with doubts about game (perhaps he has help in clubs, but minimum points, or vice versa);
- and cuebids a control at the 4 level with maximum, and good help to take care of club losers.

(Opener may be considering slam if he gets the right response.)

Using Short Suit Trial Bids:

1S - 2S

3C

Responder

- signs off in 3S with minimum and wasted values in clubs;
- bids 4S with additional values;
- bids 3D or 3H with doubts about game;
- or cuebids a control at the 4 level with maximum and no wasted values in clubs.

1S - 2S

2NT

Responder

- bids 3 or 4 spades;
- shows honours at the 3 level if in doubt;
- or cue bids at the 4 level with maximum.

Note that all these trial bids can also be made by the responder when a major suit is agreed at the 2 level.

Example

1D - 1H

2H

A new suit by responder is now a trial bid.

So, which method is better? Long suit trials or short suit trials?

No emphatic answer can be given to this question. There are certain hands where the long suit trial bids will be efficient, and others where the short suit trial bid will be more useful.

Consider the following hands:

| <u>Hand A</u> | <u>Hand B</u> |
|---------------|---------------|
| AQJXX | AQJXX |
| KQJ | KJX |
| QXXX | KJXX |
| X | X |

On both these hands, you have opened 1S and your partner responded with 2S.

On Hand A, we would desperately want help in the diamond suit, since we don't need much help in hearts and clubs. This hand would be ideally suited for a long suit trial bid in diamonds.

Hand B is slightly different. Here we need help in both hearts and diamonds, to plug the holes in both those suits. The short suit trial bid of 3C would work better on this occasion.

In fact, for those who want to be more ambitious on the subject of trial bids, we can use a method where we can allow ourselves to choose either short suit or long suit trial bids, depending upon what kind of hand we have been dealt. Here is how it works:

Combining the long suit and short suit trial bid method

(based on Ron Klinger's book on the Modern Losing Trick Count)

1S - 2S

Any bid from the opener is now a long suit trial bid, asking for help in that suit.

If opener is more interested in using the short suit trial bid on the specific hand in question, then he must first bid 2NT, announcing that he has a shortage somewhere (an undisclosed singleton or void). Responder is forced to now bid 3C, allowing the opener to identify the suit in which the shortage lies. Opener will now answer as follows:

3D= shortage in diamonds

3H= shortage in hearts

3S= shortage in clubs

If the responder has a singleton, he may choose to show his singleton (instead of bidding 3C as instructed). Opener can now use this information to decide how high he should bid.

1H - 2H

Now the opener uses 2S to announce that he has a shortage somewhere. Responder is

asked to reply with 2NT, allowing opener to identify where the shortage lies. Opener will now answer as follows:

3C= shortage in clubs

3D= shortage in diamonds

3H= shortage in spades

If opener wants to use the long suit trial bid, then he bids the suit immediately.

So: 1H - 2H

2NT= long suit trial bid in spades (since 2S is reserved for the relay)

3C= long suit trial bid in clubs

3D= long suit trial bid in diamonds

Again, responder can refuse the relay of 2NT and show his shortage as follows (allowing the opener to take further action as appropriate):

3C= short clubs

3D= short diamonds

3H= short spades

2. Minor suit agreement at the 2 level

When a minor suit is agreed at the 2 level, and the opener has extra values, consideration must be given to the fact that 3NT is still a very possible contract.

With a balanced or semi balanced hand and extra values (good 17/18-19), opener can bid 2NT with stoppers in all suits, or bid his stoppers in ascending order when he is worried about one suit.

Example

1D - 2D

2S

2S shows a spade stopper, denies a heart stopper (the suit bypassed), and is a probe for 3NT.

Opener may have something like

AQ

XXX

AKJXX

AJX

Interchange the major suits, and opener's second bid would be 2H, showing a heart stopper, and hoping to hear 2S from partner which would show a spade stopper.

With an unbalanced hand having a singleton or void and extra values, opener should jump in the short suit as a splinter, showing much more inclination towards the diamond game.

Opener can accept the invitation to game and bid 5D with no wasted values in the short suit and some extras, sign off in 4D with minimum and wasted soft values in the splinter suit, or sometimes try 3NT with a double stopper in the splinter suit and maximum, where the lead is into responder's hand.

Example 1

Example 2

| <u>Opener</u> | <u>Responder</u> | <u>Opener</u> | <u>Responder</u> |
|---------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|
| AXX | JT | AQX | XX |
| X | JXX | XX | AQX |
| AKJXX | QTXX | AKJXX | QXXX |
| AQXX | KJXX | ATX | XXXX |
| 1D | 2D | 1D | 2D |
| 3H | 5D | 2S | 2NT |
| | | 3NT | |

The system outlined above when a minor suit is agreed at the two level works well, and can be equally efficient for those partnerships that use inverted minor suit raises.

We can therefore conclude that there is a definite benefit of using trial bids, where the combined point count in the two hands is insufficient, but the game can still be made if assistance is available in the correct suits (either in the form of honour cards, or shortage).

As to which method is the best when a major suit is agreed at the two level, there is no one correct answer.

Say that the bidding went 1S - 2S, and we held one of the following hands:

| <u>Hand A</u> | <u>Hand B</u> |
|---------------|---------------|
| AQTXX | AQJXX |
| QXXX | KTXX |
| X | KTXX |
| AQJ | Void |

With Hand A, you would clearly prefer a long suit trial bid in hearts. What would you do with Hand B, though, if you were playing long suit trial bids? Would you ask for help in hearts or diamonds? Clearly you need help in both, so the short suit trial bid of 3C would be more useful here, asking for help in both hearts and diamonds. The (combined) system of using either method can be used to your advantage, since you can choose either one, depending upon whether you have been dealt a hand similar to Hand A, or one similar to Hand B.



Diniar is available for lessons in the Southern Suburbs for groups of four – intermediate and advanced.

He can be contacted on 072 709 5180 or 021 782 0167

The following article was sent to me by Kathryn and Eckhard . . .

Why online bridge is soaring in popularity (from the UK Daily/Sunday Express)

Combining mental challenges with fun, online bridge has been lockdown's perfect pastime. And as a new generation discovers the game, Cath Fox explains why it's all in the cards...

By [CATH FOX](#)

PUBLISHED: Sun, Jul 26, 2020

To understand the appeal of bridge, you only have to look at the notable names who are advocates of the compellingly addictive card game. Winston Churchill was a fan and the game's current cognoscenti include *Only Connect's* Victoria Coren Mitchell, cricketer Mike Gatting and former Blur bassist Alex James.

But you don't have to be a celebrity to enjoy bridge. My mother, Ann Owen, taught the classic game to hundreds of people in Essex. I remember her telling me that even when the snow was deep, it was always the over-nineties who made it to the lessons. Now in her eighth decade and recently returned to the UK after 16 years in Spain, she was delighted to discover all her ex-pupils are still playing at home or in clubs.

Bridge is a game of skill that's addictive.

And the game, which traces its history to the 16th century, is now enjoying a comeback. Suitable for anyone aged from eight to 100, bridge is, contrary to what many assume, relatively easy to play. It's played by four people in teams of two with a standard deck of cards and while it involves risk-taking, it's more about skill than chance. What makes the game so engrossing is that it's almost impossible to master – it's said top bridge players have developed such sophisticated powers of intuition that even computers struggle to beat them – and, like chess, the more you improve, the more you want to learn.

It's also a great social game. In England, it's estimated several hundred thousand people

play “kitchen bridge” with more than 30,000 playing competitively in clubs. Because the game combines a mental workout with an enjoyable social aspect, it claims many mental-health benefits, including reducing the risk of dementia. It’s no wonder then that dedicated players were devastated when lockdown meant compulsory closure of bridge clubs. Unless you were lucky enough to live with three other bridge players, it meant the only way to play was online.

In the last couple of months, 50,000 player sessions were recorded on just one internet platform, Bridge Base Online, where you can play just about any level of bridge, from complete beginner through to world-class. Barbara Jordan plays bridge online from her home in Oxfordshire. “I play with three friends and we’re aged between 75 and 80,” she says. “We’re each in our own home with a glass of wine and play using Bridge Base Online with Zoom on as well so we could see each other and chat. Although I’m not great with technology I’m learning quickly and now believe learning how to play remotely as well as in person should be part of every bridge course.”

Tony French, who runs two Essex clubs, has replaced weekly sessions with internet tournaments. “Lockdown has advanced the role of technology in bridge 10 years,” he explains. “And best of all I can see it helping elderly players continue playing for much longer, keeping their minds happily engaged.”

Another benefit of online playing is that it’s been instrumental in removing geographical boundaries as counties across the country set up matches with players as far apart as Sussex and Yorkshire. Grass-roots organiser Kiat Huang from Lincolnshire says, “It’s felt great to create platforms that have brought people together from all over England to play the game we love.”

There’s gratifying news about up-and-coming younger players, too, with a new generation of bridge players learning the game in schools. Val Potter, who supports youth education in Essex, says that in a recent primary school initiative one year-six student admitted, “I didn’t want to come to school today but when I remembered the bridge class I came anyway. My favourite sport was rugby – but now it’s bridge.”

Did you know?

43.6 percent of all slam contracts fail.

62.7 percent of all bridge players are women.

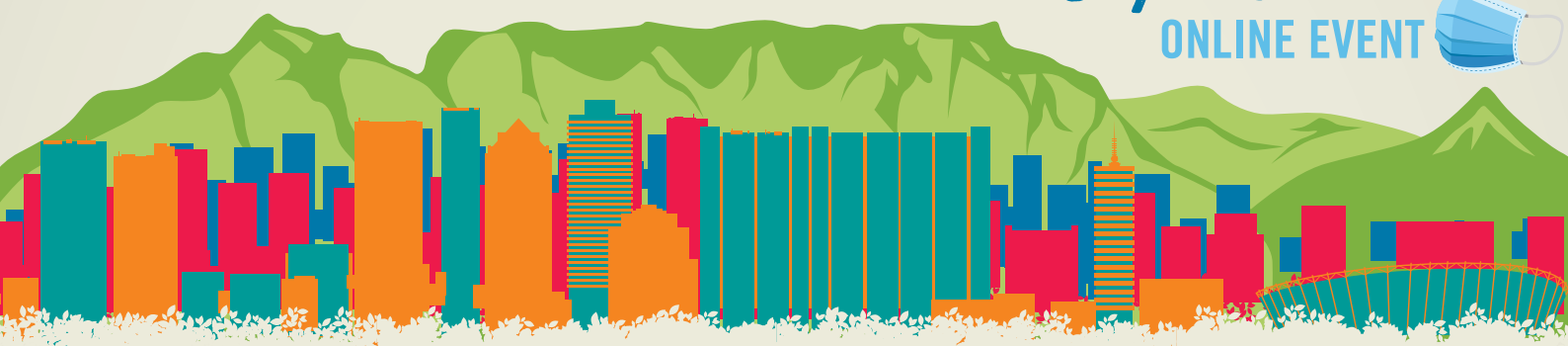
97.8 percent of all bridge statistics, including these, are made up.



FESTIVAL OF BRIDGE 2020

Cape Town

ONLINE EVENT



PAIRS

Entry fee: R400 per pair

DATES

Saturday, 12th December
(2 Sessions) &
Sunday, 13th December 2020
(1 Session)

STARTING TIMES

09h30 and 14h00

TEAMS

Entry fee: R600 per team
(6 match Swiss teams)

DATES

Wednesday, 16th December
2020

STARTING TIMES

09h30 and 14h00

Graded pairs and teams with Cash prizes for winners in all sections

Online entry form at www.wcbridge.co.za or www.sabf.co.za

Closing date for entries is Sunday, 6th December 2020

Enquiries: Jocelyn, ashberg@iafrica.com

This is a Red Point Event Open to SABF members only

The Unseen Hand

by Tim Cope

Introduction

Is bridge an art or a science? Most would probably say the latter, as it is a game that requires mathematics, probability theory and logic. I think it was one of the all-time greats, Bob Hamman, who said that he could take on a novice bridge player and within a year he could teach them to be a world class bidder. Give him a lifetime with the same player and he may never be able to make them a card player. Basic technique, such as standard suit combinations and simple probability can be learned – it is not easy, but can be achieved through hard work. The one thing that is left is the aspect that most probably differentiates the experts from the good players - the expert has the ability to visualise the unseen hands based on evidence that is at most people's fingertips, but for many it is a bridge too far.

Bridge is not an easy game. Its main attraction is that the game is not black and white – there will always remain many grey areas that involve guesswork or intuition (with a big handful of skill for good measure). Yet, sometimes bridge can appear to be a very simple game – remember those times you may have been watching people play on a vugraph match on BBO and you are shouting at the screen “Why don't they bid 6♣? It is cold.” Or “Any idiot would shift to a spade, then 3NT has no chance.” You find yourself making these statements BECAUSE YOU CAN SEE ALL FOUR HANDS. The poor players can, in the bidding, only see their own hand, or if you are defending, you can possibly see two hands (yours and the dummy). But the expert player has been working hard to visualise all the hands based on the evidence that has been presented. Sometimes even the expert will make a mistake – the picture he has in his mind may be blurred or fallacious, but there will have been a plan in their mind and a picture in their head.

Every good artist has an easel, a paintbrush, a canvas and a palette. On the palette are the various colours that may be used individually or mixed to help form the final portrait. Here is where I think of the bridge player as an artist, where the colours on the palette are the tools of the trade that the bridge expert uses to paint his picture of the four hands at the table. So, what are those tools, which can be used separately, or in conjunction with each other, to paint that final picture?

Shape

Probably the most important part of visualising the unseen hand is to determine the shape of the four hands around the table. The work to do this starts not midway through the play of the hand, but from the point when the auction begins. You need to start building that picture as soon as possible and have an idea that you can adjust based on further evidence you receive from either partner or an opponent during the play of the hand. If you do not start with an initial picture, it may be hard to build it from scratch at a critical point. For example, let us suppose you are defending and the opposition have an uncontested auction such as:

1♠ - 2♣

2♦ - 2♥ (4th suit forcing)

2NT- 3NT

What is the picture you as a defender on lead might have pencilled in for declarer's hand? Declarer has shown 5♠ and 4♦ and in response to 4th suit has shown a ♥ stopper (and denied secondary support for their partner's club suit). My guess would be that declarer has a 5-3-4-1 shape. This is not an absolute (for instance, declarer might be 5-2-4-2) but it is a starting point. After we have chosen our opening lead, we will be able to see the dummy and, working from our original premise of declarer's shape and by looking at our own hand and the dummy hand, we can now potentially deduce partner's shape and draw a picture of the shape of all four hands at the table. It is possible that we might be out by one card in one of the suits, but based on signals legitimately received from our partner it will not be tough to make that partial change to the original pattern we projected. It is my contention that by the end of trick 3, on about 95% of hands, you should, as a defender, be able to make whatever adjustments are necessary to "ink in" your initial pencil sketch. But you have to start your thought processes from the time the auction commences, not from the time you may have to make a critical decision. Just because you are not initially involved in a hand does not entitle you to fall asleep at the table – you may still have a critical role to play in the hand by way of signalling information to your partner or making an important discard.

Points

The other key feature in your visualisation process is to work out who holds what points around the table. This is mainly an exercise done by the defenders, but may also be of relevance to a declarer based on opposition bidding (or lack thereof). As a defender, we can make an approximation before we see the dummy, but our real work starts as soon as we see the dummy. This exercise should be done on EVERY hand you defend.

For instance, suppose the auction is a simple 1NT (15-17) – 3NT by your opponents. At this stage you might be either of the defenders – an opening lead is made and dummy comes down with 10 points. You should immediately be able to assess your partner's point count to within a single point by giving declarer the average point count for their opening bid (16pts) and then adding your points to this and dummy's points and subtracting from 40. Now you will know your partner's point count to within a single point and be able to assess your defensive prospects more accurately. True, the 1NT opening bid makes it easier to assess, but you should be able to make a reasonable assessment on any auction. Suppose the opposition bid 1♥ - 1♠ / 2♥ - 3♥ / 4♥. When opener bids 2♥ they were showing a long heart suit and about 11-15pts. When they accepted the game try, they indicated a point holding towards the upper range (or occasionally extra distribution). One would therefore place them with about 14pts and upon seeing dummy, we would be able to do the simple maths to within a point.

The tools of the trade

Each hand starts out as a blank canvas. As the hand progresses, we start to add some colours from our palette, concentrating on the shape of all the hands around the table and working out how the points are divided. We then use the legitimate information supplied by our partner to help complete the picture. Where will you get this information from?

- The opening lead will often indicate a certain length in a suit – this helps you build up the picture of the shape of a hand.
- When we lead a suit, partner will give us attitude towards that suit – we have already worked out roughly how many points partner has – this will help to show where those points are.
- When declarer attacks a suit, we will usually give count on a need to know and affordability basis - here again, we are adding brushstrokes, or making amendments to the hypothetical image of the hand that we may have started with.
- Partner may be able to make a discard (as opposed to a signal) or give us a suit preference signal to tell us where their values lie.

So, the overall process is quite simple:

1. We pick up our cards and wait for the auction to begin. At this stage we have no idea what may be about to transpire.
2. Even if we take no part in the auction itself, we listen intently and, if we are a defender, we draw up a hypothetical picture of the declarer's hand in terms of shape.
3. The opening lead is made, and perhaps we make some small adjustments to our pencilled-in drawing when we see the dummy.
4. We add the final brushstrokes, paying attention to the way declarer is playing the hand (if we are defending) and by watching partner's signals. If we are declaring, we also watch how the defenders are signalling to each other to build up that picture.

Follow these steps and we should have a completed canvas we would be proud to hang on our wall.

Part 1 – The Opening Lead

The opening lead sets the whole tone of the defence. Start with the right lead, and your chances of success are improved dramatically. But we need to get one thing clear – we cannot see through the backs of the cards. So, all we can hope to do is to make the right opening lead more often than the wrong lead. If we accomplish that, we are on the road to success.

When we go through this process together, we are mainly talking about teams' bridge. Here the hub of the problem for declarer is to ensure that they make their contract and, as defenders, that we take the requisite amount of tricks to ensure its defeat. The considerations in the pairs game is to sometimes stop the overtrick, and though many principles are similar, the path does diverge on occasion.

When we choose our opening lead here, we are leading to give ourselves the best chance of defeating the contract. There will be no discussion here about active and passive leads – every lead in its own way is an active lead (even if it might appear passive). So, let us start visualising and make our opening lead.

1. The Jackson Pollock Lead

Paul Jackson Pollock (January 28, 1912 – August 11, 1956) was an American painter and a major figure in the [abstract expressionist](#) movement.

Sometimes we do not have much information to work with – our canvas has a few splashes of abstract painting from which we have to draw our conclusions.

Let us suppose on two consecutive hands you sit West and the opposition have an uncontested auction as follows:

| <i>South</i> | <i>North</i> |
|--------------|--------------|
| 1♠ | 2♦ |
| 2NT | 4♠ |

You have to lead from the following two hands:

| | | | |
|------|--------|-------|---------|
| ♠ 82 | ♥ J954 | ♦ 83 | ♣ AJ543 |
| ♠ J6 | ♥ K74 | ♦ K54 | ♣ Q9874 |


Decide on what you would lead and why before reading on.

You do not have much information to go on, but you must still start to draw that picture in your head. It would not be unreasonable to make the following assumptions – these assumptions in the abstract world may be wrong, but it is all we have to go on:

- Declarer has a 5-6 card spade suit without reversing values and a balanced hand 12-14pts
- Dummy has 3 card spade support and a limited hand as they have shown no interest in slam
- The potential danger suit on the hand is the ♦ suit – when we refer to a danger suit we mean a suit where declarer might discard losers from other suits on this suit

It is this last point where we must pay the most attention before deciding on our opening lead. We paint a picture where dummy has a reasonable but not excessive diamond suit and we look at our own holding in that suit. Declarer's route to success may be in one of two ways – either using dummy's trumps to ruff losers from their hand or establishing a side suit to dispose of excess losers – here that side suit is potentially the diamond suit, so our holding in that suit is important.

On the first hand we held ♠ 82 ♥ J954 ♦ 83 ♣ AJ543. The good thing about this hand is actually our lack of values in the ♦ suit - because we have none. We can visualise partner having a decent holding in that suit that may mean declarer may have to follow the other path to success of ruffing losers in the dummy. So, our opening lead should be a trump and we hope the hand looks something like this:

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| | ♠ KJ4 ♥ K632 ♦ AQ942 ♣ 6 | |
| ♠ 82 ♥ J954 ♦ 83 ♣ AJ543 |  | ♠ 965 ♥ QT ♦ KJT5 ♣ QT92 |
| | ♠ AQT73 ♥ A87 ♦ 76 ♣ K87 | |

Without a trump lead declarer will be able to score 1 club ruff in the dummy to secure their contract. On the trump lead, and then a further trump when declarer tries to play a club, they will fall one trick short. By the way, when we lead a trump (rarely though it may be), we can use the trump as a suit preference signal - so here we would lead the 2♠ to let partner know we have something in the lower of the unbid suits.


That would be my view of the picture, albeit abstract. Score yourself as we go along. I would award the following marks out of 10:

10 - 2♠ 9 - 8♠ 6 - a ♥ 3 - a ♦ 1 - A♣

In the second hand, we have the same information and our hand was:

♠ J6 ♥ K74 ♦ K54 ♣ Q9874

If we paint a similar picture, the main worry on this hand should be our diamond holding. If declarer wishes to extract tricks from this suit then not only will they find the ♦ finesse right, but also, if they have to establish the suit, the suit will be breaking. We therefore need to attack more vigorously in search of our own tricks – which will mean leading one of the unbid suits. It might be considered dangerous to lead away from an honour, but it is sometimes more dangerous not to. So, should we lead a ♥ or a ♣? Since we are actively seeking tricks, we are more likely to get those tricks in the suit where we are shorter. The ♥ lead is therefore recommended. We envisage this possible layout:

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| | ♠ K54 ♥ Q632 ♦ AQJ94 ♣ 6 | |
| ♠ J6 ♥ K74 ♦ K54 ♣ Q9874 |  | ♠ Q32 ♥ AJ5 ♦ 876 ♣ T532 |
| | ♠ AT987 ♥ T98 ♦ T2 ♣ AKJ | |

On the ♥ lead, we will make 4 tricks. On any other lead, declarer will resort to the ♦ finesse and make 11 tricks.

My scores for this hand would be:

10 – low ♥ 6 – low club 2 – any trump lead

2. The Da Vinci Lead

Leonardo da Vinci (15 April 1452 – 2 May 1519) was an Italian [polymath](#) of the [High Renaissance](#) who is widely considered one of the greatest painters of all time. However, only 15 of his artworks have survived for certain, but we also have many of his diagrams and drawings intact which comprise the bulk of his legacy today.

Sometimes the auction may reveal more clues. Not enough to paint a masterpiece but enough so that we can draw a fuller version of the hand and at least envisage it in pencil. Let us start with one that you should find relatively easy to picture.

Again, you are West and your side takes no part in the bidding.

Your hand is: ♠ 87 ♥ 853 ♦ A762 ♣ AK94

Your opponents bid:


| <i>South</i> | <i>North</i> |
|--------------|--------------|
| 1♠ | 2♦ |
| 3♦ | 4♠ |

It is our lead again. So, what do we know about the hand?

- NS have enough for game but have not investigated slam
- They will have at least an eight card spade fit - so partner will have at least 3 trumps
- They probably also have an eight card ♦ fit

So, we may not be able to fill in the whole hand, but we can pencil in the essential details.

The whole hand could look like:

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| | ♠ K54 ♥ K92 ♦ KQJ9 ♣ J63 | |
| ♠ 87 ♥ 853 ♦ A762 ♣ AK94 |  | ♠ J54 ♥ QT76 ♦ 3 ♣ T8752 |
| | ♠ AQT96 ♥ AJ4 ♦ T852 ♣ Q | |

I hope nobody was dozing off during the auction and then picked up their hand and blindly led the A♣. Even if you wake up at this point and switch to Ace and another diamond, you will have lost your entry to give partner a second ruff and declarer will make the hand with the aid of the heart finesse.

So, your scores here (and I think I am being generous) are:

10 - A♦ 3- A♣ 1 – Any other lead


You are still silent in the auction and you hold ♠ A432 ♥ KQJ32 ♦ 87 ♣ 87. This time the auction goes:

| | |
|--------------|----------------------|
| <i>South</i> | <i>North</i> |
| 1NT | 2♣ (regular Stayman) |
| 2♠ | 3NT |

And, no, I would not be bidding over 1NT – the hand is too balanced and it looks to have great defensive potential against NT. Yet, again, we assimilate the information:

- South has 4 spades and North will have 4 hearts to have used Stayman
- Our main source of tricks would appear to be in the ♥ suit, but knowing that North has a 4 card ♥ suit is frustrating
- Our spade pips do not suggest that this suit will be a source of tricks, but we do have one (and one only) entry
- Partner may have some, but very few points, so their contribution to the defence will be minimal

So, if we take into consideration all of the above, our only real hope is the ♥ suit – here, we do not need points from partner – just the 10 or 9 of ♥ may be enough to break the contract. We hope for:

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| | ♠ J10 ♥ 10865 ♦ K65 ♣ KQJ9 | |
| ♠ A432 ♥ KQJ32 ♦ 87 ♣ 87 |  | ♠ 876 ♥ 94 ♦ QJT9 ♣ T65 |
| | ♠ KQ95 ♥ A7 ♦ A432 ♣ A63 | |

If declarer has x-ray vision, they can rise with the 10♥ at trick 1. More likely they will play low and partner's 9♥ will force the A♥ or, if they win the trick, can establish our ♥ winners before declarer can establish the tricks they need in the spade suit.

Scores: 10 = low ♥ 6- K♥ 2 – any minor suit lead

3. The Van Gogh Lead

Vincent Willem van Gogh (30 March 1853 – 29 July 1890) was a Dutch [post-impressionist](#) painter who is among the most famous and influential figures in the history of art.

Sometimes you can listen to an auction and all the details are there for you and it leaves such an impression on you (pun intended) that you can paint your masterpiece. This time the opposition bid:


| | |
|--------------|---------------------|
| <i>South</i> | <i>North</i> |
| 1♥ | 2♣ (2/1 GF natural) |
| 2♦ | 3♥ |
| 4♣ (cue) | 4NT (keycard) |
| 5♥ | 6♥ |

You are on lead with ♠ A42 ♥ 654 ♦ 654 ♣ J1098

The opposition have had a confident auction, but what picture can we build?

- The 3♥ bid is a definite slam try asking their partner to cue
- The cue chosen was 4♣ - which can be first or second round control in the ♣ suit – it will tend to be an Ace or a King as we do not cue bid shortage in partner’s primary suit
- Declarer does not have a spade control as they would have chosen that as their lowest cue over the 3♥ bid
- This probably places declarer’s shape as 3-5-4-2 to be in line with their bidding
- Our future potential for making any red suit trick seems fruitless

On this evidence, we can fill in most of the hand and realise that we have to make 2 spade tricks to defeat the contract. We know dummy has a spade control and that control rates to be the K♠. We also know that dummy has a club suit, which, whilst we can stop the immediate flow of tricks, can possibly be set up by way of a ruff. So, if we do not take the two spade tricks quickly, our goose may be cooked. This is the artistic impression of the hand we have created:

| | | |
|------------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| | ♠ KJ7 ♥ KQ8 ♦ K7 ♣ AQ432 | |
| ♠ A42 ♥ 654 ♦ 654 ♣ J1098 |  | ♠ QT865 ♥ 93 ♦ J1083 ♣ 65 |
| | ♠ 93 ♥ AJT72 ♦ AQ92 ♣ K7 | |

On any lead, other than a low spade, declarer has 12 easy tricks by setting up a long club or taking a ♦ ruff. Will they guess right at trick one? I doubt it as nobody expects the underlead of an ace at trick one!

4. The Rodin Lead

François Auguste René Rodin (12 November 1840 – 17 November 1917) was a French sculptor generally considered the founder of modern sculpture.

We move to Rodin – most famous for his sculpture “The Thinker” (of which there is one very famous version, but he was so obsessed with the concept that he made about another 16 copies).

So now we really have to think – and it is on a hand that has been giving me nightmares for over 10 years. When we played in the World Championships some 13 years ago, we reached the semi-final versus the USA and lost by 9 IMPs. On the current hand, I guess, I just did not “think” it through clearly enough and we lost 13 IMPs when on the correct lead we would have gained 17 IMPs – so a 30 IMP swing on your choice of opening lead. Mea culpa, mea maxima culpa 😊

This time your hand is:

♠ J ♥ 9862 ♦ K972 ♣ KJ83

The opponents bid:

| | |
|---------|--------------------------------|
| | 1♠ |
| 2♥ (GF) | 2♠ |
| 2NT | 3♥ (showing a doubleton ♥) |
| 4NT | 5♦ (0 or 3 – we can presume 3) |
| 7♥ | |

Our visualisation should perhaps be:


- If we have a natural trick to come from one of our minor suit kings, we can sit and wait and hope
- If we have a natural spade trick, that will come to us automatically
- It seems unlikely that we have a trick in the trump suit, but that is the only suit where we cannot wait to make a trick - we have to actively pursue it.

Have you decided on your lead yet?

If we are pursuing a trick in hearts we will need to envisage dummy holding 10x in hearts and declarer holding AKQxxx – that means that partner has the stiff J, and dummy has the three side aces. Are you seeing it now? If we do not lead a spade, declarer will be able to lay down the A♥ and cross to the 10♥ and come back to hand with a spade to draw the rest of

the trumps. But if we lead a spade, declarer with the other three aces in dummy cannot get back to hand to draw the rest of the trumps.

This was the full layout of the hand:

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| | ♠ AQ9876 ♥ 103 ♦ A4 ♣ A97 | |
| ♠ J ♥ 9854 ♦ K972 ♣ KJ83 |  | ♠ T54 ♥ J ♦ T8653 ♣ 6542 |
| | ♠ K32 ♥ AKQ762 ♦ QJ ♣ Q10 | |

If you led a wooden heart, as I did, score up -2210.

Find the spade lead and you go +100.

Team-mates were in 6♣ making (7♠ is the better Grand Slam to be in, which cannot make, so you have to defeat 7♥).

So, the scores on this one:

11- J♠ 6 – any ♥ 4 – any minor suit (yes you get a chance to score 11 out of 10!)

This part does not pretend to be a definitive work on opening leads – it is a few pages long and there have been great major books written on this topic. It is intended to be the starting point in your visualisation of the unseen hand and how you can **draw those pictures in your mind**.

If, on the 6 problems, you got them all right, then you should be writing this article, not reading it! If you scored above 40, you can be in my team any day. Below that, and we have work to do in the visualisation process, which we shall continue in the next issue.



During the closure of bridge clubs, Tim is available to play or teach online (BBO).

He can be contacted on 084-4474944 or email tim@bridgewithtim.co.za

In Memoriam – Heidi Atkinson

I first met Heidi over 30 years ago when she came to my small Joburg flat for a bridge lesson. During that lesson she asked me to assist her in directing a fundraising charity event of over 50 tables whilst admitting that she had never been a TD before. I got paid a BarOne for my services and the rest is history. Over the years we collaborated on many ventures (and I got more BarOnes). Her devotion of service to the game was unparalleled, first running a successful club in Pretoria and then putting the Southern Cape Bridge Union on the map. Apart from being a member of the SABF committee, she became our national Chief Tournament Director, and it would be hard to count the number of National Congresses that she oversaw whilst her patient husband Richard dealt tens of thousands of boards. Our condolences to her family. She will be a great loss to bridge, but a greater loss as a good friend.

Tim Cope

Interview on TV

Tim Cope, as President of the WCBU, was interviewed on Sport Federation TV a few months' ago. A recording of the interview may be found on YouTube at the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hfMI1EGmxdo>

SABF Subscriptions for 2021

An SABF subscription entitles a member to play at any affiliated Bridge Club in South Africa and earn Masterpoints.

Please pay by EFT, using your **SURNAME** and **SABF#** as reference. The amount is R100 which is less than previously.

The subscription of an additional R100 for the Bridge Centre may be added to this payment.

WCBU
Bank ABSA
Branch# 632005
Ac# 918 767 7416

Strategy at Matchpointed Pairs Tournaments

Part 7: Defensive Play

By Kathryn Herz & Eckhard Böhlke

Defensive play is very important, since in about 50% of all deals you are on defence. Defence is probably the most difficult part of the game and the standard of defence is generally lower than in other areas. Many bridge players do not like to defend. The main reason is perhaps a lack of (self-) confidence in the partnership's defensive skills; or the urge to be in control as declarer, whilst on defence fate would depend on both defenders, i.e. you have to rely on your partner to do the right thing at the right time. As a result, many players try to declare most of the hands, even though their "bidding one more" may carry them overboard.

In this part we present some ways to improve your defensive skills, perhaps even to help you learn to enjoy defence.

Basic Principles of Defensive Play

At Teams, you will seize even the slightest opportunity to beat the contract. If this proves impossible, the (IMP) cost for risking additional overtricks is negligible.

At Matchpoints, however, defensive play is a highly complex matter, not least because the number of tricks you are aiming at it is not always clear from the outset. You should never put all your eggs in one basket, as additional overtricks tend to be very costly for the defending party. At every deal, the \$10,000 question for the defenders is: how many tricks do we need to make in order to score well? (See hand #3 in part 1 of our series of articles from June 2019).

**At Matchpoints, our objective is to outscore most other pairs holding our cards.
Thus, beating the contract is not necessarily the primary target for the defence.**

Avoiding overtricks may well be sufficient to get a good score. However, against "normal" contracts doomed to failure it is vital to seize the opportunity of further downers, i.e. not to content yourself with beating the contract. Thus, just like at declarer play...

Defending at Matchpoints, you must define the number of tricks you aim at in EVERY hand!

This may be difficult, sometimes only possible during the course of play, yet always essential.

In most hands, the crucial question is whether to opt for an active or passive defence

An **active defence** (starting from the lead) is one that tries to reduce declarer's quick trick taking potential which can be a side suit or when ruffs may come into play. You reduce this potential by cashing/establishing your tricks before it is too late or by playing trumps to reduce declarer's ruffs. A **passive defence** (starting from the lead) is one where we are happy to wait for the tricks to come to us during the hand rather than seek those tricks out quickly.

One common mistake (particularly against suit contracts) is to get too active on defence. At Matchpoints, if in doubt go for a passive defence, whereas at Teams most often an active defence is called for.

- When defending against a "normal" contract, the recommended strategy is a **passive defence**. Whilst wanting to establish tricks for our side, we must avoid giving away (over-)tricks to declarer.

Furthermore, a passive defence should be assumed in the following situations:

- If both dummy and declarer have shown balanced hands (when declarer cannot get rid of losers by discards on a long suit or by ruffing) the defence may act cautiously, i.e. passively;

- Against 1NT contracts: we are likely to get on lead often enough to find a switch in time if necessary;
 - Against 6NT contracts;
 - At Matchpoints, also choose a passive lead against 4NT (however, at Teams, rather lead aggressively, as a passive play is unlikely to beat declarer holding some 31 HCP in the combined hands);
 - Against all grand slams;
 - Declarer holding a very strong hand opposite a very weak dummy: we mustn't present declarer with free finesses.
- Yet the following situations suggest an **active defence**:
 - If the opponents have a **good side suit (for us a "danger suit")**, an active lead is needed to cash/establish our own tricks fast, i.e. before declarer can discard his losers.
For example, after 3♦-3NT, declarer will soon be able to establish 9 or 10 tricks (or run them from top). Therefore, the defence may have to cash their top tricks before losing the lead. Against the above bidding a lead from AKx or KJxx may be worth considering. Whilst this may cost a trick, allowing declarer to take his tricks without putting up much of a fight is most probably the greater risk.
You should always look at your holding in the "danger" suit, as this might provide discards for declarer. Let's say the auction was a simple 1♠-2♦, 2♠-4♠ then the "danger" suit is ♦. If you had a hand like ♠xx♥Kxx♦Kxx♣Kxxxx this is the worst possible ♦ holding (the suit is probably breaking 3-3 and the finesse is right). So, you need to go active and lead ♥ rather than ♣, because you should be looking for tricks in a suit where you are shorter, thus more likely to develop tricks. But if on the same auction your hand is ♠xx♥AJxx♦xx♣Jxxxx, then you can reasonably hope that partner may have some length and/or honours in ♦ so you can afford a passive lead (which here is a trump or a ♣).
 - If the opponents have **short suit(s)** enabling ruffs, again an active trump lead commends itself. A typical example: 1♦-1♠, 2♣-3♦ requires a trump lead to reduce declarer's ruffing potential.
 - Against **marginal games** (usually not bid at other tables) the recommended strategy is to try and beat the contract by all means (similar to Teams).
 - At Matchpoints it is often right to cash an ace against 6NT to prevent an overtrick.
 - Against **double fits** an active defence is necessary, as losers will soon be discarded on the second suit.
 - Against **doubled sacrifice contracts** (when we could have made our game) we must beat them by 500 (if we are non-vul) or 800 respectively (if we are vul). Therefore, usually our strategy should be an active defence, which may be a trump lead.

A further crucial point of defensive play:

Good defence is often a matter of partnership co-operation. Yet at Matchpoints, carding becomes even more important, as every single trick will matter. So, if you want to score a few percentage points better, each and every card should convey a signal. Therefore, you must pay close attention to your signalling agreements. Needless to say, this makes Bridge even more demanding as regards concentration.

Your partnership must agree on an **efficient defensive carding method** including **attitude, count and suit-preference signals!**

Make sure you have clear agreements with your partner regarding at least the following issues, otherwise, you cannot visualise the unseen hands. (See also the series of articles by Diniar Minwalla in WCBU newsletters starting from edition 3 of December 2018.):

- Leads: 3rd/5th or 4th best; what to lead from honour sequences, from xx and from xxx. Do these agreements differ when defending against suit or NT contracts? What do you lead in a new suit in subsequent tricks?
- Priority order of attitude, count and suit preference signals on partner's lead, declarer's lead and when discarding
- Standard carding (high-low = encouraging/even) or upside-down carding (low-high = encouraging/even)
- Regarding count signals: when the signalling player has already played one or more cards of the suit described (e.g. to communicate an attitude signal) does a count signal relate to the present or the original holding?
- Regarding attitude signals by discards: standard, upside-down or Italian (odd = encouraging, even = suit preference)
- Does a suit preference signal relate to two suits or – when possible – to three suits, i.e. are any suits excluded and, if yes, which one(s)?

Furthermore, we recommend agreeing on:

- Signal in the trump suit (count or - better - suit preference)
- “Smith Echo”, i.e. an attitude carding signal showing additional values (or lack thereof) in the first suit led by the defence, while the signal itself is given in the first suit played by declarer.

You'll find most of these topics covered on any convention card (to be used as a checklist on partnership agreements for defensive play). Do not miss out on these few essential agreements! It is not so important which methods you agree upon, but to know which signal is given when. To avoid misunderstandings, discuss your carding with your partner in great detail!

Finally, a tip:

With their books “Winning Notrump Leads” (2011) and “Winning Suit Contract Leads” (2012) David Bird & Taf Anthias revolutionised some undisputed bridge wisdom. For the first time ever, they analysed the leads as one crucial part of defensive technique by running a computerised simulation. The results were just amazing, as in a number of cases they contradicted the classic theories and recommendations on leads. Ever since, top players have been increasingly scrutinizing their leads' efficacy. Both books are highly recommended for serious tournament players. We will present some quizzes from their books in an extended publication of our series of articles.

Quizzes

Let's look at some deals demonstrating how the basic principles of defensive play can be applied at Matchpoints. Please complete each quiz before looking at the answer/ explanation towards the end of this newsletter.

Deal 1) Dealer South, both vul. The opponents reached game after the following bidding: (1NT¹⁵⁻¹⁷)-p-(2♣)-2♦, (2♥)-p-(4♥). Partner West leads ♦2 (3rd/5th, high from doubleton). Dummy North comes down:



Trick 1: ♦2, ♦8, ♦K, ♦Q.

East pauses and reflects the facts known so far:

- NS are in a normal contract: 8-card fit with 25+ HCP. The field will bid 4♥.
- Partner West cannot have more than a jack.

- Declarer may have a singleton $\spadesuit Q$ (partner having led from $\spadesuit J72$).

However, as it is more likely the 1NT opener has played a false card from $\spadesuit QJ7$ and since there is no chance of finding partner with $\spadesuit K$, you continue with $\spadesuit A$.

Trick 2: $\spadesuit A, \spadesuit 7, \spadesuit 2, \spadesuit 9$

Declarer has false carded at trick 1. So far, so good, you will beat the contract.

How does East visualise the West and South hands? How many tricks should East aim for? What is East's further plan for the defence?

Deal 2) Dealer East, NS vul: opponent South plays $2\spadesuit$ doubled after $1\heartsuit-(2\spadesuit)-p-(p)$, $X-(p)-p-(p)$. Sitting West you lead $\clubsuit K$ from $\spadesuit A105 \heartsuit 63 \spadesuit J972 \clubsuit KQJ8$. Dummy comes down with $\spadesuit Q964 \heartsuit Q742 \spadesuit 63 \clubsuit 1065$.

Trick 1: $\clubsuit K, \clubsuit 5, \clubsuit 7$ (high-low = positive), $\clubsuit 4$

Trick 2: $\heartsuit 6$ (high-low from doubleton), $\heartsuit 2, \heartsuit 10, \heartsuit 5$

Trick 3: $\clubsuit 2, \clubsuit 9, \clubsuit J, \clubsuit 6$

Trick 4: $\heartsuit 3, \heartsuit 4, \heartsuit J, \heartsuit 9$

Trick 5: $\heartsuit K, \spadesuit 10, \spadesuit J, \heartsuit 7$

You see the following cards remaining (red coloured and deleted cards have been played already):



How does West visualise the East and South hands? How many tricks should West aim for? What is West's further plan for the defence?

Deal 3) What to lead holding $\spadesuit 642 \heartsuit KQ42 \spadesuit 9 \clubsuit A9532$ after the following uncontested bidding by the opponents ($1\spadesuit$)-(2 \spadesuit), (3 \spadesuit)-(3 \spadesuit), (4 \spadesuit)? What is your choice and why?

Deal 4) What to lead holding $\spadesuit AQJ5 \heartsuit 75 \spadesuit Q74 \clubsuit 10984$ after the following uncontested bidding by the opponents ($1\heartsuit$)-(2 \spadesuit), (3 \heartsuit)-(4 \heartsuit)? What is your choice and why?

Deal 5) What to lead holding $\spadesuit 75 \heartsuit KJ63 \spadesuit Q75 \clubsuit 10873$ after the following uncontested bidding by the opponents ($1\spadesuit$)-(2 \spadesuit), (2 \spadesuit)-(3 \spadesuit), (4 \spadesuit)? What is your choice and why?

Deal 6) What to lead holding $\spadesuit A75 \heartsuit 862 \spadesuit 972 \clubsuit K742$ after the following uncontested bidding by the opponents ($1\heartsuit$)-(2 \clubsuit), (2 \spadesuit)-(3 \clubsuit), (3 \spadesuit)-(3 \heartsuit), (4 \heartsuit)? What is your choice and why?

Deal 7) The opponents bid undisturbedly: ($1\clubsuit$)-(1 \spadesuit), ($1\heartsuit$)-(3 \heartsuit).

Holding $\spadesuit 4 \heartsuit 104 \spadesuit QJ6 \clubsuit QJ109852$ you lead $\spadesuit 4$.

Dummy: $\spadesuit Q753 \heartsuit A963 \spadesuit K984 \clubsuit 6$.

Trick 1: $\spadesuit 4, 3, K, 6$

Trick 2: $\spadesuit A, \spadesuit 9, \clubsuit Q, \spadesuit 5$

Trick 3: $\spadesuit 8, \spadesuit J, \heartsuit 4, \spadesuit 7$

Trick 4: What do you play now? What is your plan?

Donation for schools learning bridge

Regrettably, Atlantic Bridge Club has closed down, but they have very generously donated bridge equipment to the WCBU for teaching in schools.

The club has donated ten bridge tables and tablecloths, as well as gift pens, which will be distributed to the schools that are part of the bridge teaching programme. Towards the end of last year, the club had donated four tables to False Bay College in Khayelitsha to assist with bridge development there. The WCBU is most appreciative.

Due to the current situation, the very successful bridge teaching in schools was halted in March, but will hopefully be reinstated early next year.

Socially distanced bridge . . .



Inter-provincial trials with a tribute to Malcolm Siegel

by Diniar Minwalla

The Western Cape trials for the Interprovincial teams' tournament took place earlier this year. The trials were won by the Western Cape team consisting of Malcolm Siegel, Rob Sulcas, Maureen Narunsky and Imtiaz Kaprey.

Here is a hand played by Malcolm Siegel, where his declarer play efforts earned his team the right to represent Western Cape at the Interprovincial tournament:

| | | |
|------|------|------|
| | K864 | |
| | 954 | |
| | K875 | |
| | KQ | |
| AT3 | | Q2 |
| K32 | | T876 |
| JT9 | | A432 |
| 9863 | | J42 |
| | J975 | |
| | AQJ | |
| | Q6 | |
| | AT75 | |

The bidding is not of much interest, and Malcolm and Rob duly reached the normal contract of 4S. West led the Jack of diamonds, which ran around to Malcolm's Queen. Malcolm played a spade to dummy's King, which held the trick, and followed this by cashing the King and Queen of clubs in dummy. Malcolm now exited a spade from dummy, which East won with the Queen. East now shifted to a small heart, and the critical moment of the hand had arrived. If Malcolm had decided to take the heart finesse (as most of us would have done), the contract would have gone down. But Malcolm had other ideas. He rose with the Ace of hearts and played the Ace of clubs, delighted to see the Jack of clubs come down on this trick. He discarded a heart from dummy on the Ace of clubs, and another heart on the ten of clubs. Next, he played a diamond to the King which lost to the Ace. West could do no better than play back another diamond, which Malcolm trumped and claimed two of the last three tricks on a cross ruff, only losing one more trick to the Ace of trumps.

This was the last board of the final, and it earned Malcolm's team a swing of 12 IMPS, allowing his team to win the match by 1 solitary IMP.

We miss you terribly, Malcolm. May your noble soul rest in eternal peace.

Answers to Kathryn's & Eckhard's quizzes on defensive play

Deal 1) Topic: Defence against a normal contract

Dealer South, both vul. The opponents reached game after the following bidding: (1NT¹⁵⁻¹⁷)-p-(2♣*)-2♦, (2♥)-p-(4♥). Partner West leads ♦2 (3rd/5th, high from doubleton).

Dummy North comes down: ♠84♥Q1075♦1098♣AKJ10

Your East hand is: ♠QJ10♥A42♦AK6543♣9

Trick 1: ♦2, ♦8, ♦K, ♦Q.

Trick 2: ♦A, ♦7, ♠2, ♦9

How does East visualise the West and South hands? How many tricks should East aim for? What is East's further plan for the defence?

At Teams, this would be easy. East could have a hand like ♠76532♥6♦2♣875432 (see below deal 1.a.). Therefore, you give Partner West a ♦ruff at trick 3 and wait for the ♥A to beat the contract.

At Matchpoints, however, you have to play for a second downer by establishing a ♣ruff in the East hand (assuming a distribution as shown in deal 1.b. taking the - albeit small - risk of East having only a ♥singleton). The play should proceed as follows:

Trick 3: ♣9, ♣6, ♣2, ♣10

Trick 4: ♥5, ♥A, ♥8, ♥3

Trick 5: ♦3, ♦J, ♥6, ♦10

Trick 6: ♣3, ♣J, ♥2, ♣Q

In the unlikely case of a distribution as shown below in deal 1.a. (West with a ♥singleton) the tricks would be played like this:

Trick 3: ♣9, ♣6, ♣2, ♣10

Trick 4: ♥5, ♥A, ♥8, ♥6

Trick 5: ♦3, ♦J, ♣4, ♦10

Declarer now draws trumps and makes his contract.

Deal 1.a.) West with ♥singleton

| | | |
|---------|--------|---------|
| | N | |
| | ♠84 | |
| | ♥Q1075 | |
| | ♦1098 | |
| | ♣AKJ10 | |
| W | | E |
| ♠76532 | | ♠QJ10 |
| ♥6 | | ♥A42 |
| ♦2 | | ♦AK6543 |
| ♣875432 | | ♣9 |
| | S | |
| | ♠AK9 | |
| | ♥KJ983 | |
| | ♦QJ7 | |
| | ♣Q6 | |

Deal 1.b.) West with ♥doubleton

| | | |
|--------|--------|---------|
| | N | |
| | ♠84 | |
| | ♥Q1075 | |
| | ♦1098 | |
| | ♣AKJ10 | |
| W | | E |
| ♠76532 | | ♠QJ10 |
| ♥63 | | ♥A42 |
| ♦2 | | ♦AK6543 |
| ♣87543 | | ♣9 |
| | S | |
| | ♠AK9 | |
| | ♥KJ98 | |
| | ♦QJ7 | |
| | ♣Q62 | |

Score sheet (6 tables)

| Contract | NS MP* | NS | EW | EW MP* |
|----------|--------|-----|-----|--------|
| S 4♥= | 9 | 620 | | 1 |
| S 4♥= | 9 | 620 | | 1 |
| S 4♥-1 | 3 | | 100 | 7 |
| S 4♥-1 | 3 | | 100 | 7 |
| E 4♥-1 | 3 | | 100 | 7 |
| S 4♥-1 | 3 | | 100 | 7 |

Score sheet (6 tables)

| Contract | NS MP* | NS | EW | EW MP* |
|----------|--------|----|-----|--------|
| S 4♥-1 | 7 | | 100 | 3 |
| S 4♥-1 | 7 | | 100 | 3 |
| S 4♥-1 | 7 | | 100 | 3 |
| S 4♥-1 | 7 | | 100 | 3 |
| S 4♥-2 | 1 | | 200 | 9 |
| S 4♥-2 | 1 | | 200 | 9 |

(*MP = matchpoints) – our score highlighted in red.

In the actual deal the second downer is easily missed. However, score sheet 1.b. demonstrates the importance to seize the opportunity for a second downer in contracts doomed to failure from the outset. The second downer here gains a further 60%. **Don't content yourself with just beating the contract once when you could beat it twice.**

Of course, there is the odd chance of a singleton ♥ with West as outlined in score sheet 1.a., in which case we will score a near-bottom (losing 60%). However, as we may safely rate the probability of a second singleton with West to be quite small, we take a chance at Matchpoints. Declarer may once in a while make his contract, but much more likely we score a near-top for beating the contract twice.

Deal 2) Topic: defence after competitive auction

1♥-(2♦)-p-(p), X-(p)-p-(p). Sitting West you lead ♣K from ♠A105♥63♦J972♣KQJ8. Dummy comes down with ♠Q964♥Q742♦63♣1065.

Trick 1: ♣K, ♣5, ♣7(high-low = positive), ♣4

Trick 2: ♥6 (high-low from doubleton), ♥2, ♥10, ♥5

Trick 3: ♣2, ♣9, ♣J, ♣6

Trick 4: ♥3, ♥4, ♥J, ♥9

Trick 5: ♥K, ♦10, ♦J, ♥7

How does West visualise the East and South hands? How many tricks should West aim for? What is West's further plan for the defence?

You pause after trick 5 and reflect the facts known so far:

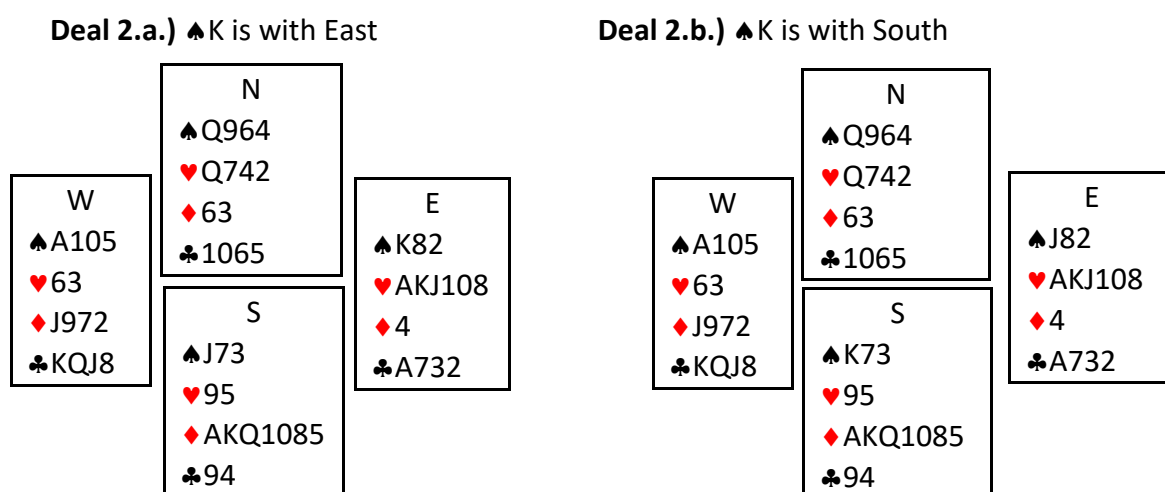
As EW we can most probably make game in 3NT or 4♥ for a score of at least +400. (However, game may not be bid at all tables.)

Therefore, we must beat 2♦ by at least two tricks for a score of at least +500.

Declarer is likely to hold a 3262 distribution (or less likely 4252).

Where should the second under-trick come from? These are the alternatives:

- Partner East has ♠K (and perhaps even ♠J) to give West a second ruff. In this case we will beat the contract three or four times (see deal 2.a.).
- Partner does not have ♠K, but he has ♠J. On a passive return, we will beat the contract twice (see deal 2.b.).



As down two doubled is well worth a top already (and further under-tricks would hardly improve our score) we assume the less optimistic alternative b. A strong indication for East not to hold ♠K is his play of ♥K at trick 5 instead of the ♥A (which should show a suit preference). Thus, at trick 6

West should play passively, allowing declarer to win his ♦ or ♣ continuation, waiting for our two ♠ tricks (which we would also at least have scored in case of deal 2.a.). The one thing West must not do is cash ♠A hoping for East to hold the ♠K, as in case 2.b. this would result in only one down for declarer, i.e. a terrible score for EW (see below score sheet I).

Score sheet I (6 tables)

Deal 2.b.: ♠ ace played at trick 6

| Contract | NS MP* | NS | EW | EW MP* |
|----------|--------|----|-----|--------|
| W 2NT+1 | 10 | | 150 | 0 |
| S 2♦X-1 | 7 | | 200 | 3 |
| E 3♥+2 | 7 | | 200 | 3 |
| W 3NT= | 4 | | 400 | 6 |
| E 4♥= | 2 | | 420 | 8 |
| W 3NT+1 | 0 | | 430 | 10 |

Score sheet II (6 tables)

Deal 2.b.: ♦ or ♣ played at trick 6

| Contract | NS MP* | NS | EW | EW MP* |
|----------|--------|----|-----|--------|
| W 2NT+1 | 10 | | 150 | 0 |
| E 3♥+2 | 8 | | 200 | 2 |
| W 3NT= | 6 | | 400 | 4 |
| E 4♥= | 4 | | 420 | 6 |
| W 3NT+1 | 2 | | 430 | 8 |
| S 2♦X-1 | 0 | | 500 | 10 |

(*MP = matchpoints) – our score highlighted in red.

Score sheet I: bad result if you cash ♠A at trick 6 and the distribution is as shown in deal 2.b. (based on our assumptions EW score only 30%)

Score sheet II: good result if you play (passively) ♦ or ♣ at trick 6 and the distribution is as shown in deal 2.b. (based on our assumptions EW score 100%).

Deal 3) Topic: active or passive lead?

What to lead holding ♠642♥KQ42♦9♣A9532 after the following uncontested bidding by the opponents (1♠)-(2♦), (3♦)-(3♠), (4♠)? What is your choice and why?

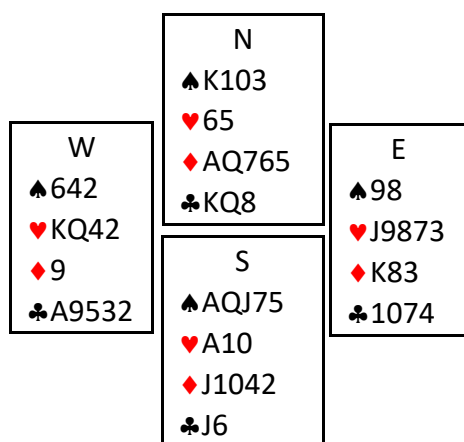
The opponents seem to be in a normal contract. At Matchpoints, it is not our primary objective to beat the contract. Whilst we want to establish tricks for our side, we do not want to give away any (over-)trick. Therefore, usually a passive defence is recommended.

The following alternatives may be considered:

- a. Leading ♦ singleton, hoping for a ruff
- b. Leading ♥K intending to establish tricks in ♥

Leading a singleton in the opponents' side suit is aggressive and therefore risky, particularly as partner is known to hold only very few HCP. Therefore, the lead of ♥K appears preferable.

At Matchpoints, we play for the following distribution (or a similar one):



Score sheet (6 tables)

| Contract | NS MP* | NS | EW | EW MP* |
|----------|--------|-----|----|--------|
| S 4♠+1 | 8 | 450 | | 2 |
| S 4♠+1 | 8 | 450 | | 2 |
| S 4♠+1 | 8 | 450 | | 2 |
| S 4♠= | 3 | 420 | | 7 |
| S 4♠= | 3 | 420 | | 7 |
| S 4♠-1 | 0 | | 50 | 10 |

*MP = matchpoints) – our score highlighted in red

Leading ♥K results in a good score (for 4♠=), as a ♥trick gets established. However, the ♦ singleton apparently is too much of a temptation, thus the likely lead at most tables. As a result, declarer will rise with the ♦A, draw trumps and discard ♥10 on ♣ for an overtrick. A bad score for EW! (Why one declarer went down is hard to understand, but such things happen at Matchpoints

at club level).

Deal 4) Topic: active or passive lead?

What to lead after (1♥)-(2♦), (3♥)-(4♥) holding ♠AQJ5♥75♦Q74♣10984? What is your choice and why?

Lead an active ♠A(!): the opponents seem to be in a normal contract, usually having at least 25 HCP between them. You have unfavourable holdings in ♥ and, more importantly, in ♦ as the “danger suit”; visualising declarer with ♥AKJxxx and dummy with ♦AKJxx would easily give them 11 tricks, and the ♣A is not an unlikely card for them to hold as well. Consequently, an active lead is called for, even though the ♠A is lacking support of ♠K. (A passive defence is only appropriate if dummy’s suit is unlikely to provide a good source of tricks for declarer.)

Deal 5) Topic: active or passive lead?

What to lead after (1♠)-(2♦), (2♠)-(3♠), (4♠) holding ♠75♥KJ63♦Q75♣10873? What is your choice and why?

Lead an active ♥3: the opponents have struggled to game; both ♠ and ♦ are badly placed for us; not everybody will bid game; you must beat the contract to score well. Therefore, the time has come to attack. After all, an overtrick will hardly make a difference to your score if your opponents were one of the few pairs to bid game.

| Score sheet 5.1. (6 tables) | | | | | | Score sheet 5.2.b. (6 tables) | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|----|-----|----|----|--------|------------------------------------|----|-----|----|----|--------|
| Assumption: passive lead | | | | | | Assumption: active ♥ lead succeeds | | | | | |
| Contract | NS | MP | NS | EW | EW MP* | Contract | NS | MP* | NS | EW | EW MP* |
| S 4♠= | 8 | 420 | | | 2 | S 4♠= | 9 | 420 | | | 1 |
| S 4♠= | 8 | 420 | | | 2 | S 4♠= | 9 | 420 | | | 1 |
| S 4♠= | 8 | 420 | | | 2 | S 3♠+1 | 4 | 170 | | | 6 |
| S 3♠+1 | 3 | 170 | | | 7 | S 3♠+1 | 4 | 170 | | | 6 |
| S 3♠+1 | 3 | 170 | | | 7 | S 2♠+1 | 4 | 140 | | | 6 |
| S 2♠+1 | 0 | 140 | | | 10 | S 4♠-1 | 0 | | 50 | 10 | |

* MP = matchpoints – our score highlighted in red.

- 5.1.: Assumption: everybody leading passively a trump or a club:
 - We score 20% as EW when NS are making their contract
 - 5.2.: Assumption: only we chose the active ♥ lead:
 - a. Our active lead fails. Giving away an overtrick, we lose 20%;
 - b. Our active lead succeeds. We score a top gaining 80%.
- We can win a lot by an active lead (and lose only little if unsuccessful)

Conclusion: As long as the majority of the field are in a making contract, limiting overtricks is very important. However, this truism is losing relevance as soon as the final contract is more likely to be the exception than the rule.

Deal 6) Topic: active or passive lead?

What to lead holding ♠A75♥862♦972♣K742 after the following unopposed bidding by the opponents (1♥)-(2♣), (2♦)-(3♣), (3♦)-(3♥), (4♥)? What is your choice and why?

Lead an active ♠A: you cannot be very optimistic to beat the contract since you have a very weak holding in declarer’s (“danger”) ♦ suit whilst your ♣K appears to be favourably placed for declarer

in front of dummy's long ♣ suit. Thus, attack with the ♠A - though unsupported - hoping to cash a couple of spade tricks before declarer finesses in clubs to pitch a losing spade.

A trump lead is not completely out of the question, as the opponents only agreed on ♥ as trumps at a late stage of the bidding. However, as you hardly stand a chance of preventing (cross-)ruffs, go for the active defence.

Deal 7) The opponents bid undisturbedly: (1♣)-(1♦), (1♥)-(3♥).

Holding ♠4♥104♦QJ6♣QJ109852 you lead ♠4.

Dummy: ♠Q753♥A963♦K984♣6.

Trick 1: ♠4, 3, K, 6

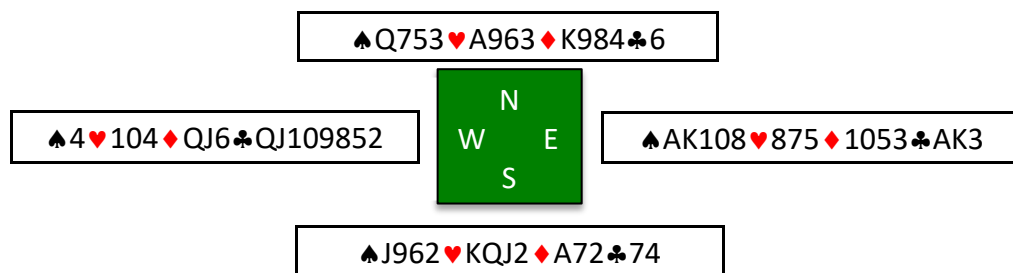
Trick 2: ♠A, ♠9, ♣Q, ♠5

Trick 3: ♠8, ♠J, ♥4, ♠7

Trick 4: What do you play now? What is your plan?

Partner's ♠8 is a suit preference signal, as ever when giving a ruff. So, we should return a ♦!?

No! Declarer has falsecarded from ♠J962♥KQJ2♦A72, still holding the ♠2 to create the illusion that your partner held ♠AK1082 originally, playing the 8 from his remaining ♠1082. Being wide-awake, we do not fall into declarer's trap. Holding ♠AK1082 and opening strength, partner would have intervened with 1♠ over the 1♣ opening. Also, we did not overlook that partner won the first trick with the ♠K, followed by the ♠A. If partner wanted to signal suit preference for ♦, he would have played the ♠A first. Furthermore, from ♠1082 he would have played the 10 as a suit preference signal for ♦. Meticulously watching partner's carding helps us avoid being trapped by declarer. The complete deal:



Tip: The way to play from a sequence of cards should be part of your partnership agreements.

- In the example above we saw that we could play from AK first the King or the Ace. You need to agree which of the two is neutral and which is a suit preference signal.
- Partner leads to your suit holding of AKQJ10. Which card do you win the first trick with, and which one do you play to the second trick? The sequence of plays denotes a suit preference!
- Finally, in which sequence do you cash your tricks vs. a NT contract? E.g. from ♥KQJ83 you led the K.

Dummy: ♥542

Trick 1: ♥K, 2, 3, 7

Trick 2: ♥Q, 4, 6, A

Partner has shown two ♥ cards.

When re-gaining the lead at a later stage, do not thoughtlessly play ♥ from the top, i.e. J, 8, 3 but instead play e.g. J, 3, 8 when still holding the ♣K.

Strange requests to a BBO TD

by Steve Bunker

| No. | TD Call | TD Reply |
|-----|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Please make my hand smaller | Do you want fewer points or smaller cards? |
| 2 | I want to double but it won't let me | You are not allowed to double your partner (even if they deserve it) |
| 3 | It won't let me bid 1D | It's traditional not to make the same bid as your RHO |
| 4 | My partner won't play a card | Your partner is the dummy (though it's a close call) |
| 5 | I can't see dummy | I'm not sure you want to |

Free bridge books on the Internet

If you Google Mats Nilstrand's ebooks, you will find some books that he has written in .pdf format that can be downloaded for free. Mats is a Swedish bridge expert and he is distributing some of his work for free to assist bridge players who are isolated at home during this time. *(Thanks to Eckhard for this tip - Ed.)*



**How much of
your wealth is in
South Africa?**
Diversify with the experts.

 **WARWICK**
Financial Maturity

International Investment Solutions

0800 50 50 50 | warwickwealth.com

An owner of Authorised Financial Services and Credit Providers