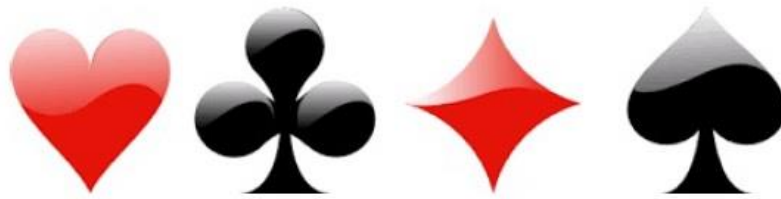


Table Talk

*A Quarterly Publication of
Vermont's ACBL Unit 175*

July 1, 2018



Editors
Mark Oettinger
Ingi Agnarsson

Editor's Message (Mark Oettinger)

This is our fourth issue...a full year. Producing *Table Talk* is fun...but it's also hard work. Please help us by submitting articles for publication. This issue features *three* guest columns. These are very much appreciated by your Editors, and I'm sure, by our readership. Special thanks to our external contributors this quarter: June Dorion, Jay Friedenson, and Mark Wheeler! I hope that we have done justice to your submissions through our editorial process. Aside from these much-appreciated contributions, we received no "letters to the Editors" during the past quarter. Is there anybody out there? We really love to hear from you, and are happy to design content that is responsive to your interests.

Since taking over this project exactly one year ago, we have seen the establishment of a website to house our current issues, and as many archival issues of *Table Talk* as we can find. The URL is as follows:

www.bridgequarterly.org

Since publication of our April 1, 2018 issue, Diana Limoge was kind enough to give us her collection of 26 issues of *Table Talk*! What a goldmine! We haven't got around to scanning and uploading them to the website yet, but we will. In the meantime, the website already has 29 (30 with this one) of the 49 issues that we have in our archives. Have a look! There's a wealth of high-quality material in the pages of a third of a century of *Table Talk* issues. I remain hopeful that more issues will come to light before they disappear into the mists of time.

What's new in bridge? Based upon my entirely non-scientific and anecdotal observations, sectionals and regionals seem to be getting smaller. A similar anecdote from Iceland is that when Ingi left, he was among the youngest in his club, when he occasionally visits 20 years later, he is *still* among the youngest in the club. But, if the newcomer development and support efforts that are underway at certain clubs (Burlington Bridge Academy (actually located in Williston) is an example) continue at the present pace, this trend may be reversed. On the other hand, online bridge seems to be growing. As regular readers of *Table Talk* know, I dabble in internet bridge. Interestingly, as I read through Donna Limoge's issues of *Table Talk* (largely from the 1990s), online bridge featured somewhat prominently even back then. At that time, however, OKBridge was the only online bridge option mentioned. OKBridge still exists, and they claim to be very vibrant. I have tried a bit to explore its offerings, without much success. I would be very interested in hearing from readers who have experience with online bridge purveyors other than BBO. In the meantime, BBO can be found at:

www.bridgebase.com

My BBO username is MDO7912. Ingi's is IAGNARSSON. Look us up online.

I have been spending a little more time at regionals lately, and for its size, Vermont is rather well represented, both in terms of raw attendance and in terms of tournament success. It's no secret that it's a bit of a financial hardship for Vermont players to compete in regional tournaments, since it's all but impossible for us to attend them without paying to stay overnight. That said, we have a number of players whose masterpoint totals reflect both longevity and consistent

success. I'm going out on a bit of a limb by claiming all of the following players (and their current masterpoint holdings) as Vermonters, but I invoke Editorial privilege in doing so:

Allan Graves	23,588
Ellie Hanlon	18,792
Mary Savko	15,756
Frank Hacker	12,227
Wayne Hersey	5,520
Phil Sharpsteen	5,140
Gerry Di Vincenzo	5,061

We are privileged to count these fine players as our friends and our role models. I am sure that all would agree that they are not only fabulous players, but shining examples of decorum and comportment at the table. Thank you all for setting such a fine example.

Painting the Town Red, BridgeBase-Style (Ingi Agnarsson)

It's Saturday night and it's time to break out and do something crazy! It's going to be fun! Armed with Chamomile tea, a chocolate chip cookie, and a computer, you log into Bridgebase.com.

OK, some would say that's not how to paint the town red on a Saturday night, but what the heck do they know? They think they're cool, but they probably don't even know what Stayman is! And how would they invite to slam with 6-5 in the minors after partner opens 1NT?? Let's not concern ourselves with such naïvetés, but focus instead on the exciting task at hand.

On Board 1, sitting South in an IMP game, and facing all 'bots, you are dealt this elite collection:

♠AK1042

♥-

♦AK107

♣AQ97

Partner (North) is Dealer. He passes, as does RHO, and it's your turn. What is your opening bid? Formulate a plan of opening bid and continuation to describe this hand to partner before reading on.

What did you decide? A simple approach would be to open 1♠ and next jump to 3♦. This approach has the benefits of being simple, but it has several shortcomings as well. For one, you cannot be certain that your partner (or the opponents) will bid over 1♠, and clearly, you want to explore the hand more than that. Second, jumping in one of the minors will almost certainly bury the other. And what if partner responds with forcing NT and then bids 3♥ over your 3♦? Would you scramble to 3NT where the opponents may have a number of ♥ tricks over partners lousy suit, while a slam may be lay-down in a minor? Or, if your LHO preempts

with 3♥ and it goes pass, pass back to you, then what? The continuation depends on what happens, and on your partnership agreements, but to my mind, 1♠ is not a good opening bid.

I prefer a more straightforward and forcing approach by immediately describing a game-going hand (only 3 losers according to basic “losing trick count” principles). I therefore opened a strong 2♣. Now, no matter what happens, partner knows that she needs very little indeed to go to game, and can with greater ease intelligently describe her hand or compete over the opponents’ interference. As expected, the bidding proceeds Pass, 2♦, Pass, partner announcing a weak-ish hand, probably less than about 8-9 points (or whatever robots do on a Saturday night...who knows). You now bid 2♠, showing at least 5♠. Partner limps to 2NT, showing no more than 2♠, but you hope for something potentially helpful for a notrump contract (that is, more than 0 points!). OK, you want to be in game, but you’re worried about the ♥ suit in 3NT. Also, you should still be keeping alive a potential slam. You make a simple descriptive bid of 3♦ (not simply because that’s your better suit, but because you potentially want to be able to show your other minor, which would be very hard to do if you now instead rebid 3♣). Partner responds 3NT. You’re not so happy with how this is going, still worrying about the ♥ suit. You have a void, and partner didn’t bid ♥ on either of the two opportunities she had. She probably has 3 or 4♥ at most, and quite possibly lacks a ‘hard’ stopper. Given at most 4♥, and at most 2♠, partner must have a fit with one of our minors, probably ♣. So...you keep all of your options in play by bidding 4♣, elegantly describing your hand as 5=0=4=4 and strong! You would now succumb to 4NT by partner (probably a real stopper in ♥ and no interest in other games or slam), but she bids 5♣ instead. Many people would probably stop there, content to find a fit. But with no ♠ losers, no ♥ losers, at most one ♦ loser, a compulsive optimist at the control seat, encouraged by chamomile tea, I raised to 6♣, hoping for 5-card support or some useful spots in partner’s hand. She does not disappoint. Here is the whole hand:

<p> ♠ J3 ♥ Q62 ♦ 862 ♣ K8642 ♠ Q986 ♠ 75 ♥ J109543 ♥ AK87 ♦ J4 ♦ Q953 ♣ 5 ♣ J103 ♠ AK1042 ♥ - ♦ AK107 ♣ AQ97 </p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left; width: 25%;">West</th> <th style="text-align: left; width: 25%;">North</th> <th style="text-align: left; width: 25%;">East</th> <th style="text-align: left; width: 25%;">South</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>2♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>2♦</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>2♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>2NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3♦</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>3NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>4♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>5♣</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>6♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4" style="text-align: center;">All Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	West	North	East	South		Pass	Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass	2♠	Pass	2NT	Pass	3♦	Pass	3NT	Pass	4♣	Pass	5♣	Pass	6♣	All Pass			
West	North	East	South																										
	Pass	Pass	2♣																										
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♠																										
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♦																										
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♣																										
Pass	5♣	Pass	6♣																										
All Pass																													

Partner has K fifth of trump! Not THAT surprising, and while that may seem a bit lucky, absent the ♣K, she could have had ♠Q and/or ♦Q instead. West leads a ♥. The ♥Q, if you try it, does not hold. What is your plan?

Think about this for the next issue of *Table Talk* (bridgequarterly.org)! We hope that some of you will send us an email ‘letter to the editors’ including your comments on the bidding and your plan to make 6♣. You get to see all hands! Can you do better than me seeing N and S? The challenge is on! *Table Talk* should be a community effort, and the more you participate, the more fun it will be. In our next issue, we will examine the various possible lines of play, and we will offer what we think is objectively the optimal approach.

Evaluating “Unusual” Hands - Suggested for Less Experienced Players (Mark Oettinger)

This article is in response to a reader who said, ”I find that hands with common distributions are comparatively easy to bid. What advice can you offer on how to evaluate the potential of unusually-shaped hands?”

We can all relate to this question. No matter how long we've been playing bridge, the "distributional freaks" are always a challenge, and getting them right is one of the things that sets the stronger players apart from the weaker ones. Some writers suggest that success in this area requires "judgment," and that judgment can only be acquired over time. But is it really that mysterious? I believe that judgment, at least in part, refers to a set of principles that can be applied to evaluate distributional hands reliably. Let's see if we can identify a few.

As a starting point, the reader's question got me thinking. What are the types of hands that we are talking about? A review of Ingi's article on bridge odds in the October 2017 issue of *Table Talk* reveals that approximately 15% of all bridge hands have 10 or more combined cards in two suits. Of those, roughly two-thirds (i.e., ~10% of all hands) are either 5-5 or 6-4 in the two long suits. So, let's look at those...the most common of the uncommon hands...since on average, we'll get two or three of them per session.

Compare the two following hands:

♠AQxx ♥AJx ♦QJx ♣Kxx versus ♠AKQxxx ♥xx ♦KQJ10 ♣x

The first hand, which most would likely open 1N, has 17 HCP. It's perfectly balanced, and is at the top of the usual 1NT opening range. The second hand, which many would likely open 1♠, has 15 HCP...2 fewer HCPs than the first hand. But is the second hand "weaker" than the first? Imagine yourself declaring with each of the two hands above, with identical dummies, each with an Ace and nothing more:

Hand #1

♠xx
♥xxxx
♦xxx
♣Axxx

Hand #2

♠xx
♥xxxx
♦xxx
♣Axxx

♠AQxx

♥AJx

♦QJx

♣Kxx

♠AKQxxx

♥xx

♦KQJ10

♣x

In Hand #1, with 21 combined HCPs, good defense may hold you to as few as 4 or 5 tricks. In Hand #2, with 19 combined HCPs, as long as ♠ split 3-2, you're almost certain to take 10 tricks. What happened to the old chestnut that, "You need 26 points to make game?"

Counting High Card Points (HCPs) is indispensable, but it's just a starting point. Distribution, concentration, fit with partner, and other factors, must also be taken into consideration as you evaluate your hand. Here are a few principles to keep in mind:

1. *Once you have found a fit, you add points for shortness outside your established trump fit (1 for a doubleton, 2 for a singleton, and 3 for a void), but can you (or should you) also add points for length? Or is this double counting? This is an interesting question, and one that, to my knowledge, is not well-addressed in the literature. If we have a fit, and I have shortness, then it stands to reason that I should have length elsewhere. For that reason, I am disinclined to count both length and shortness. [Editorial insert by Ingi: I'd say that it **is** advisable to count both length and shortness, since length increases your trick-taking power and shortness avoids losers. I count an extra point for a 5-card suit, a second point for 6-card suit, and so on, for **each** long suit in my hand.]* That said, "losing trick count" is very much affected by one's "ownership" of long suits (the more distributional your hand, the fewer losers you have), and is a wonderful way to double check your HCP-based analysis. See the next article for an introduction to the concept losing trick count;
2. If your high cards are concentrated in your long suits, upgrade your hand. If you want to do independent research on this point, this concept is commonly

referred to as “in and out valuation.” More on this topic in future issues of *Table Talk*;

3. If your HCPs are in Aces and Kings, upgrade your hand. If they are in Queens and Jacks, downgrade it;
4. Ingi’s favorite secret hand evaluating tool: Don’t forget the middle cards! 10s and 9s can be powerful and 8s and 7s are obviously far better ‘x’ cards than 3s and 2s. Upgrade your hands especially if 10s and 9s connect to honors;
5. Majors are better than minors;
6. Before you make a marginal bid (or for that matter, whenever you make a bid), ask yourself whether you have a convenient rebid (or series of bids) that accurately describes your hand; and
7. Listen to the auction. If the opponents are bidding, you will generally get a pretty good idea whether they have a fit. You can often tell how many cards they have in their suit by how high they are willing to bid. Stronger players will generally bid to the level at which they have combined trumps. This is one of the cornerstones of the Law of Total Tricks (LOTT), a hugely influential principle popularized by Larry Cohen in his books, *To Bid or Not to Bid*, and its sequel, *Following the Law*. Both are required reading for anyone aspiring to become a strong player. Under this principle, if one has 8 combined trumps, one can generally safely compete to the 2-level. With 9 combined trumps, one can generally safely compete to the 3-level. And so on. Let’s say that your “capable” opponents compete to the 3-level, and that you have Axxx of their suit. How many can partner have? Probably none. At most one. Similarly, if they don’t have a fit, chances are that your side doesn’t have a fit either. Under those circumstances, it’s probably best to defend.

Valuable further reading on this topic can be found in Marty Bergen’s books, including his famous series (there are at least three volumes) devoted to what he

calls “*Points Schmoints.*” Marty has a clear and approachable writing style, and is a favorite of advancing players.

6NT Doubled Making 7 (A Guest Column by June Dorion)

A gathering was held at the home of Nancy Zapetal on Saturday, December 2, 2017, to honor Bob Smith, who has done so much to promote bridge in the Manchester area. Kim Likakis organized this special day. I was playing with Don Campbell, and I picked up the South hand:

<p>♠ 32 ♥ - ♦ AK5432 ♣ AJ432</p> <p>♠ 1098 ♠ Q76 ♥ Q109876 ♥ KJ543 ♦ - ♦ QJ109 ♣ Q876 ♣ 5</p> <p>♠ AKJ54 ♥ A2 ♦ 876 ♣ K109</p>	<p>Board 3 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>West</i></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><i>Don</i></th> <th style="text-align: right;"><i>East</i></th> <th style="text-align: right;"><i>Me</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right;">1NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: left;">Dbl</td> <td style="text-align: center;">6♦</td> <td style="text-align: right;">Dbl</td> <td style="text-align: right;">Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: left;">Pass</td> <td style="text-align: center;">6NT</td> <td style="text-align: right;">Dbl</td> <td style="text-align: right;">All Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<i>West</i>	<i>Don</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>Me</i>				1NT	Dbl	6♦	Dbl	Pass	Pass	6NT	Dbl	All Pass
<i>West</i>	<i>Don</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>Me</i>														
			1NT														
Dbl	6♦	Dbl	Pass														
Pass	6NT	Dbl	All Pass														

I opened the hand 1NT, aware that it might play better in ♠s. My left-hand opponent doubled to show a one-suited hand. Don jumped directly to 6♦. I was extremely happy to have three ♦ in support, although a little disappointed that I did not have an honor. East doubled, I passed, West passed, and to my amazement, Don corrected to 6NT. This was also doubled by East, ending the auction.

The opening lead was a small ♥. I discarded a ♠ from dummy, and won the ♥A in my hand, hoping to bring home the contract by felling the outstanding ♦s in 2 rounds and then finding the ♣K onside. It was a bit of a longshot, but we’ve all faced worse. When I played the ♦A, however, I found that West was void, and that East therefore had the suit stopped. Since ♥s were wide open at this point, I

had to find a way to make the contract without losing the lead. So much for relying on the ♦s.

My second chance for making the contract was to find the ♠Q onside and each opponent holding 3♠. I therefore led a small ♠ from the board, and finessed the Jack. When that worked, I held my breath as 2 more rounds of ♠ successfully established 5 tricks in that suit. When the ♣K also proved to be onside, I was home, making 6NTX with an overtrick. Not bad for an old gal. What a perfect illustration of why we love this game!

Editor's Note: Castleton University Professor Emerita June Dorion currently ranks 10th among Vermont's 400+ ACBL members, holding 3,891 masterpoints as of press time. Still playing in Sectional tournaments, often with Diamond Life Master Wayne Hersey, she remains a fearsome competitor, and an incredibly warm, charming and engaging personality. June holds a Master's Degree in French from Middlebury College, and has taught Latin, French, Spanish, English, Civics, Geometry and Calculus at the high school and college levels. Thank you, June, for setting such a shining example of how the game should be played!

Odds Online (Mark Oettinger)

We frequently have the opportunity to solve bridge problems through the application of “odds,” the likelihood that suits split one way or the other. Here's a good example. You hold the following hand in a BBO “day-long game,” at matchpoint scoring:

♠A3
♥AK1087
♦A
♣AJ1032

20 HCPs, but a hand that has even more trick-taking potential than its impressive point count would simplistically suggest. Remember, you can't count your shortness unless and until a fit is found, but *if you do* have a ♥ or ♣ fit, the

doubleton ♠ and singleton ♦ give you three additional distributional points, for 23 Total Points (plus points for the fifth ♥ and fifth ♣, see above, for 25 total points). It never hurts to do a quick losing trick count, and this is especially true when the point-count intuitively doesn't seem to do justice to a hand. This is a *four*-loser hand, which generally correlates with a hand in the 22-24 HCP range, which further confirms your instinct that the hand "punches above its weight class." Remember, however, no definitive use of losing trick count should be undertaken unless and until you've found a fit.

So...what's your opening bid? Is it a 2♣ opener, or do you start with 1♥? I'm afraid that if I open 1♥, it will go Pass, Pass, Pass. If it does, will we have missed a game? That seems likely if partner as little as has ♥xxx, or ♣xxxx(x), and some useful distribution, but not if the hand is a bad fit. The 2♣ alternative runs the risk of overstating my hand if it turns out that partner predominantly has ♠s and ♦s. These days, most partners will scrape together a one-over-one response with most 5 HCP holdings [the philosopher Sharpsteen has even been known to opine that, "An Ace is worth a bid."] With the slight comfort of that pronouncement echoing in the dim recesses of my bridge memory, I decide to open 1♥.

I exhale when robo-partner responds 1♠. Robo-opponents keep silent. Now I have an obvious game-forcing jump-shift to 3♣, which perfectly describes both the strength and the shape of my hand. Partner raises to 4♣. What now? On BBO, you can "float" your cursor over the bids that you are considering in order to see how robo-partner will interpret them. Likewise, you can float over robo-partner's bids in order to see what they were intended to convey. I learned that the 4♣ bid showed 4+ ♣ and was "invitational." Not terribly helpful. I have to admit that I didn't take the time to explore how robo-partner would take 4♦ (probably as forcing, and showing the ♦A), and I decided that robo-partner's response to 4NT (Blackwood) wouldn't help me much. Instead, I just figured that with a 9-card fit, all the Aces, a King, and great intermediates in my long suits, we should have a play for 6♣, and I bid it.

Here are my hand and partner's (note that I got a bit lucky, as without the ♠K, North would not have responded, and 5♣ would make easily):

♠K10985

♥-

♦J97

♣87643

♠A3

♥AK1087

♦A

♣AJ1032

Now for the play. West led the ♠4. I covered with dummy's 10. East contributed the Queen, and I won the Ace. If the trumps split 2-1, I can just bang down the ♣A and another ♣, and all I will lose is one ♣ honor, since I can trump all of my small ♥ in dummy. What can possibly go wrong? The answer is...the trumps can split 3-0. Ingi's *I Like Those Odds* article in the April 1, 2018 issue of *Table Talk* tells us that the likelihood of 3 missing cards splitting 2-1 is 78%, and that the likelihood of them splitting 3-0 is therefore 22%. There are two possible 3-0 splits. The void can be on your right, or it can be on your left. The probability of each arrangement is therefore 11%. In the hand under discussion, you are fated to go down if all three trumps are on your left. On the other hand, you can still play the suit for one loser if all three trumps are on your *right*.

The correct line therefore appears to be to trump a ♥ to get to the dummy, and then lead a small trump toward your hand. If the King or Queen appears on your right, you win the Ace and can draw the two remaining trumps in either one or two rounds. If East instead plays the ♣9, you play either the Jack or 10, and then the Ace, letting East take his remaining honor when he sees fit. In the meantime, you cross-ruff the hand on your way to 12 tricks. If East splits his King-Queen, when he wins his second honor, he should lead his third trump in order to cut down on

your ruffs. Now you need to find the ♠ no worse than 4-2 in order to have a way to pitch the last ♥ that you won't be able to ruff.

Were you worried that West might win his singleton ♣ honor and lead a second Spade for East to ruff? Is that more than an 11% chance? If so, you should play ♣A and another instead. Let's refer back to Ingi's chart again. The chances of 6 cards splitting 5-1 is 15%, so the chances that *East* started with a singleton are only 7.5%. So, you need go no further with the analysis. The safety play in trumps is better. But let's finish the analysis anyway. Even if East did only start with one Spade, he may also have started with only one trump, and not be able to ruff the second ♠ in any event. And even if he *did* start with a singleton ♠ and a doubleton ♣, West would have to find this highly inspired defense. All in all, the safety play is the *clear* favorite.

Taken to this extreme, this analysis is a bit complicated, but all you have to remember is that 3-0 splits occur 22% of the time, whereas 5-1 splits occur 15% of the time, and you can readily identify the better line "in real time" at the table.

Why Avoid Voidwood? (Ingi Agnarsson)

In the January 1, 2018 issue of *Table Talk*, we examined "Voidwood," which also goes under the names "Exclusion Blackwood," "Lackwood," and "I-Don't-Have-This-Suitwood" (the last name is perhaps suggested here for the first time, but it WOULD stick to memory), and concluded that, "There is no excuse not to have Voidwood in your bidding arsenal." I raise the topic again for the purpose of reporting that my last article seems to have had absolutely no impact on local practice, just like most of my scientific articles. But, in order not to give up hope, I would like to highlight two hands from a recent game at the Burlington Bridge Club that might...just might...convince some of the non-adopters of the error of their ways.

	♠ AKJ109	
	♥ 4	
	♦ Q106	
	♣ K742	
♠ 72		♠ 86
♥ J7		♥ 653
♦ K8532		♦ J74
♣ A953		♣ QJ1086
	♠ Q543	
	♥ AKQ10982	
	♦ A9	
	♣ -	

The par score on this hand is 7♥ or 7♠, both of which are laydown contracts (5 ♠ tricks, 7♥ tricks, and the ♦ A, let alone additional trump tricks in the ♠ contract). *Nobody reached the grand slam*, presumably because an Ace was missing. There are many simple ways to get there, the simplest of which would be for North to open 1♠ and for South to simply bid 5♣ (Voidwood). The response (based on 3014) would be 5♠ (two keycards without the Q of trumps), at which point, South can easily count to 13 tricks, and achieve an easy 100% at our club.

	♠ AJ64	
	♥ AQ103	
	♦ K8	
	♣ AQ2	
♠ 7		♠ Q5
♥ J4		♥ K5
♦ AQJ43		♦ 1097652
♣ 106543		♣ J97
	♠ K109832	
	♥ 98762	
	♦ -	
	♣ K8	

Here 6♠ is laydown, and there are some chances of getting all 13 tricks. *Only one pair reached the slam* (the perennially strong pairing of Farrell-Hersey). I don't know how they reached it, but with Voidwood, anyone could. There are many

ways of bidding these hands, but if South passes originally, North opens 2NT, and after a Spade transfer by South and a super-accept by North, South can bid 5♦ (Voidwood), hear 5♥ (3014) in response, and bid the slam with confidence, knowing that no ‘relevant’ key card is missing. If South starts with 2♠, Voidwood might or might not become a part of the auction. Likely, North would simply ask for key cards and shoot for 6. Alternatively, North could start cuebidding with 4♣. South might then hint at his void with a 4♦ cuebid—or, more effectively, bid Voidwood at this point. Either way, a slam will not be missed.

So, I encourage you—nay, beg you—again. Reconsider. There is no excuse not to have Voidwood in your arsenal! Be the first opponent to use it at my table, and to achieve a good result, and you’ll be featured in a coming issue of *Table Talk*.

Should One Open a Weak Two with only a 5-Card Suit? (A Guest Column by Jay Friedenson)

Last year, I went to a bridge event in Florida where Jeff Meckstroth and Eric Rodwell offered a 30-minute Q&A session. For those who don't know them, “Meckwell” (as they are commonly known) are arguably the best and most successful pair in the world, the #1 and #3 masterpoint holders of all time, with just under 160,000 masterpoints between them and numerous world titles. At the lecture, I asked them if they like to preempt with a 5-card suit, and if so, what were their requirements. Eric said, “Yes, but it better be a good suit.” I had been waiting for the right time and opportunity to make the bid, and I found it in a game this year in Clearwater, Florida.

Sitting West, I dealt and held the following hand, white against red, playing matchpoints:

♠AKJ52 ♥9 ♦76542 ♣109

“Holy cow,” I thought, “This is it!” And I opened 2♠. The complete hand was as follows:

<p>♠ 987 ♥ AK5432 ♦ A8 ♣ 64</p> <p>♠ AKJ52 ♠ 1064 ♥ 9 ♥ 87 ♦ 76542 ♦ K109 ♣ 109 ♣ AKQJ7</p> <p>♠ Q3 ♥ QJ106 ♦ QJ3 ♣ 8532</p>	<p>Board 4 : Dealer West : All vulnerable</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>West</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>North</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>East</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>South</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2♠</td> <td>3♥</td> <td>3♠</td> <td>4♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>4♠</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>Dbl</td> <td>All Pass</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	2♠	3♥	3♠	4♥	Pass	Pass	4♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl	All Pass	
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>														
2♠	3♥	3♠	4♥														
Pass	Pass	4♠	Pass														
Pass	Dbl	All Pass															

I was trembling in my boots. I know North to be a very good player, and I figured if he doubled, he must know what he was doing. I steeled myself for a significantly bad result. I got the ♥A lead, followed by the ♦A, and those were the only 2 tricks that I lost.

At trick 3, another ♦ went to my K in the dummy. I played a ♠ to the AK. The ♠ broke 3/2 with the Queen dropping doubleton, so I played the ♠J to finish drawing trumps. My 3 losing ♦ went away on winning ♣s. 4♠X making with an overtrick was good for + 690 and 17 matchpoints...an absolute top. Just one of those routine 21 point games.

In retrospect, I did not play the hand well. After winning the second trick with the ♦K, I should have played low to the ♠A and then gone back to the board to the ♣A. Then I should take the ♠ finesse by playing a low ♠ from dummy towards my ♠J. As luck would have it, on the actual lie of the cards, the ♠Q would have appeared perforce. Playing this way offers better odds of picking up the suit than dropping the ♠Q doubleton by playing AK. Oh well, as I have said many times, I'd rather be lucky than good, especially since I don't have a choice. Of course, that line of play runs the risk of losing the opportunity to run the ♣ suit if the

opponents' ♣ are distributed 5-1 with the ♣8 with the 5-card suit. That risk is, of course, low compared to the more favorable odds of picking up the onside ♠Q with that line of play.

Interestingly, the hand would have made 10 tricks against any defense, even if I had played the ♠ correctly and had lost the finesse to the ♠Qxx in the North, or if I had played the ♠A and K as I did, and the ♠Q hadn't dropped. As long as the ♠ are 3-2, I make.

Editor's Note: We have omitted several paragraphs of Jay's extremely detailed and scholarly analysis of alternative possible defenses (wait until you see who North was...someone not exactly new to the art of defense!), and how those hypothetical defenses could have been countered through astute play by declarer. Bottom line: North gave away the overtrick on his second lead, but Jay was always going to make at least 10 tricks.

Here's what the whole field did on the hand:

NS	EW		NS Score	EW Score	NS MPs	EW MPs
2♥		=	110		16	1
2♥		=	110		16	1
2♥		=	110		16	1
3♥		-1		100	13	4
3♥		-1		100	13	4
3♥		-1		100	13	4
	3♣	+2		150	11	6
	2♠	+2		170	9	8
	2♠	+2		170	9	8
	3♠	+1		170	9	8

4♥		-2		200	6	11
4♥		-2		200	6	11
4♥		-2		200	6	11
	5♣	=		400	4	13
	4♠	=		420	3	14
	4♠	+1		450	2	15
3♦		-5		500	1	16
	4♠X	+1		690	0	17

Without the 5-card 2♠ preempt, I don't know where my partner and I would have ended up. How would you and your partner have bid the East/West hands? How about North/South hands? Kudos to my partner for raising my ♠ twice. No doubt he was encouraged to raise, the first time, based on "total tricks" principles, thinking that we had a 9-card fit. The second raise was presumably based upon the source of tricks in ♣. Note that we would have gotten a very good score just for bidding game in ♠. But poor North. He guessed wrong to double, although the double only cost him 1.5 matchpoints.

Want to hear some irony? "Poor North" was none other than Eric Rodwell, playing with his wife Donna. Thanks for the good tip, Eric! I have a confession to make. It was the first time in my bridge life that I thoroughly enjoyed a session even though we did not place. This hand cost the Rodwells 1st place, and relegated them to 2nd, with a "mere" 63.94%.

Editor's Epilogue: Ingi and I open 2 of a major regularly on a 5-card suit if we have a 4-card or longer minor on the side, and our use of the system has paid big dividends. Ingi reports that his coaches in Iceland (from when he was a youth internationalist) tested bidding hypotheses by using computers to model vast numbers of hands. They reputedly found that opening 2H or 2S with a 5-card is remarkably effective as partner tends to have 3 more often than not. Think of it

this way: if I have 5 Spades, the other three players have 8 Spades among them. The most common distribution of the remaining 8 Spades is 3-3-2 (31.11% of the time), and when they are distributed in that manner, we have an 8-card fit two-thirds of the time. Adding the probability of hitting partner with 3-card or better support in the remaining (less likely) distributions makes for a total likelihood over 50%. The Law of Total Tricks tells us that we should be “safe” at the 2-level with an 8-card fit, so it’s good strategy to get there as quickly as possible, and to take advantage of the preemptive character of the bid. Of course, even when you don’t find partner with a fit, he may have a fit with your other suit, and even if he doesn’t, it’s often hard for your opponents to double you. Besides, you make your opponents’ life miserable, which is, after all, your job at the table.

NAMYATS (Mark Oettinger)

What do you open in 1st seat with this hand?

♠KJ865432
♥32
♦83
♣5

What about this hand?

♠AKQ85432
♥32
♦83
♣5

Following basic principles of preemption, you might argue as follows:

“With 6♠ and 5-10 HCP, we open 2♠;” and

“With 7♠ and 5-10 HCP, we open 3♠.”

“Therefore, with 8♠ and 5-10 HCP, we should open 4♠.”

That logic would dictate that both of the above hands should be opened 4♠. Astute readers will note that the first hand actually has only 4 HCP...as opposed to 5, but I would argue that the hand virtually *screams* to be opened 4♠, especially when non-vulnerable. The 1 missing high card point strikes me as an insufficient basis upon which to disqualify the hand from showing its fundamental character...which is that of a weak 8-bagger. Its highest and best use is as a license to jam the bidding as much as possible. You want to put maximum pressure on the opponents, who may well have a monster ♥ fit. Some would even consider opening 5♠ with the first hand in third seat. In any case, the analysis below holds just as well if the first hand is KQxxxxxx instead.

What about the second hand? How different is it from the first? It has 9 HCP instead of 4, but it is precisely the same shape. It has only 5 losers, whereas the first hand has 7 losers. The second hand should therefore play 2 tricks better. You’re probably saying, “But you always caution not to use losing trick count until a fit has been found.” That’s true, but with AKQxxxxx, you **hold** an 8 card ‘fit’ and, what’s more, you’re odds-on to be loserless even opposite a void. Namyats is a convention that calls for you to open the first hand 4♠ (or 4♥ if it’s the ♥ suit), but to open the second hand 4♦ (a transfer to 4♠) (or 4♣ as a transfer to 4♥ if your 8-bagger is ♥) The suit needn’t be self-sufficient, but the hand should contain only 5 losers...not enough to open 2♣...but close.

Since this system usurps the standard 4♣ and 4♦ opening bids, one can use an opening of 3NT to describe such a hand, and partner passes or bids 4♣, whereupon opener passes (with ♣) or corrects to 4♦ (with ♦). Since the standard 3NT opener is usurped by this work-around, with 25-27 balanced, one must therefore open 2♣ followed by a rebid of 3NT. If the 3NT opener is otherwise occupied (e.g., as ‘gambling’), it is also possible to forgo the 4♣ or 4♦ opening, and to open 3♦ or 5♦ instead.

Some may be wondering whether it might be strategically wise to play “Transfer Namyats.” Opener bids 4♣ (showing 8 ♥ and 5 losers), and responder doesn’t bid

4♥ directly, but instead bids 4♦, allowing opener to accept the transfer by bidding 4♥, thereby becoming the declarer. This approach has the interesting additional advantage of preventing responder's LHO from naturally being able to be 4♦ (or 4♥ when opener has ♠, as the case may be) when there's more than one freakishly long suit around the table. Frankly, I see little value in keeping our 8-card suit hidden, and am inclined to think that it is likely to be more advantageous to have the lead come up to the responder's hand. Plus, who doesn't just *love* to table an 8-card suit! Since I don't have software with which to generate a million hands by which to determine whether regular Namyats or Transfer Namyats is more effective, I'll be grateful to receive feedback from all adopters of either variant. Another variant would be to use the intermediate bid to indicate slam interest.

Two points of housekeeping. First, did you notice that "Namyats" is "Stayman" spelled backwards? *The Official Encyclopedia of Bridge* credits Sam Stayman with the idea, and undoubtedly embarrassed that his name appears on every convention card in the bridge universe, the inventor was overcome by a fit of modesty. Second, Namyats is alertable.

Here's an example of Namyats in action at a recent NYC Regional. The hero of the story (North) is none other than Ron Weiss:

♠AKQJ8753

♥32

♦105

♣5

♠1062

♥A

♦A92

♣AKQ943

North	East	South	West
4♦	P	4N	P

5♠	P	7N	P
P	P		

5♠ showed 2 key cards with the Queen of trump. I could count 13 tricks, and didn't have anything to think about. Just another ice-cold run-of-the-mill 27 HCP notrump grand slam.

An Elegant Defense Missed (A Guest Column by Mark Wheeler)

♠Jxx
♥Kx
♦1098
♣AQxxx

♠AQ984
♥Axx
♦AKx
♣10x

North	East	South	West
			1♠
2♣	P	2NT	P
P	P		

I led the ♠8. Declarer won the ♠J in the dummy, partner playing the 7. Declarer played a ♣ to the K in his hand, and a ♣ back to the board, followed by 3 more ♣s, as partner contributed the ♣Jxx. Find 3 discards before reading on.

I discarded a ♠, easy enough, then a low ♥, followed by a low ♦. On the auction, Declarer rates to have all but a Queen. Of course, if he has all of the missing honors, he might have opened a ragged 12 pointer. So, partner ought to have a Queen or 2 Jacks.

Looking back, I should have figured that South has 7 tricks, no matter what (5 ♣, 1 ♥ and 1 ♠). So, we have to find a way to take the rest of the tricks. A lead of a ♠ will give South 2 tricks in that suit, as he must have 3 to the King, or maybe 4, for his bid.

After taking ♣5, South played a low ♦ and I returned a low ♥, South winning the King, reaching the position diagrammed below. Unfortunately, it was all over by then, as I was endplayed. I won the ♦ continuation and had to give Declarer a ♠ for his 8th trick.

♠xx
♥x
♦109
♣-

♠AQ9
♥A
♦A
♣-

My carding was not well thought out. Had I foreseen the endplay, I should have played partner for either the ♥Q or the ♦Q. If partner holds the ♦Q, I should keep a small ♦ and discard 2 little ♥. That way, we can cash 3 ♦, with partner winning the 3rd round of ♦ and returning a ♠ for down 2 (we win 3 ♠tricks, 3 ♦ tricks and the ♥A). If partner holds the ♥Q, I must pitch my little ♦, keep all my ♥, and either:

(A) discard 2 ♠, reducing my ♠ holding to AQ, but allowing me to lead a small ♥ each time I win a top ♦, so that we ultimately win 2 ♦ tricks, 2 ♥ tricks and 2 ♠tricks. Assuming that partner started with 2 ♠, he is sure to make his ♥Q, and then be able to lead back to me through declarer's ♠K; or

(B) more elegantly, pitch the ♥A on the last ♣, leading a small ♥ each time I'm in with a top ♦, thus assuring that partner's ♥Q is an entry to his hand at some point, so that we take 1 ♥ trick, 2 ♦ tricks, and 3 ♠tricks, for down 1.

It is probably a toss-up whether partner has the ♥Q or the ♦Q, but the point is that West needs to assume one or the other when the last ♣is played, and he needs to defend on that basis. Pitching a ♠, a ♦ and a ♥...as I did...fails regardless of which Queen partner holds. In fact, partner held the ♥Q, so the elegant play would have worked! The point is to visualize an entry in partner's hand when you need the lead coming into your hand, and then to defend accordingly.

♠Jxx
♥Kxx
♦109
♣AQxxx

♠AQ984
♥Axx
♦AKx
♣10x

♠7x
♥Qxx
♦Jxxxx
♣Jxx

♠K10x
♥Jxxx
♦Qxx
♣Kxx

Editor's Note: Mark Wheeler is a transactional and appellate lawyer in Ithaca, New York. He was a year ahead of me in law school, and we played as partners for the two years of our overlap. We played mostly cafeteria bridge (and a lot of it), but we also competed in one collegiate tournament. The regional final was a 2-session event. We won the first session by two or three boards, and everyone wanted to sit with us at lunch. Thoughts of the all-expense-paid national final danced in our heads. The first board of the second session was 2SX for -470, and the rest of the session didn't get much better. No national final for us. We

returned to Albany (a 3+-hour drive) in partner's convertible Triumph TR-7, well after dark, with an external temperature of roughly -20F, and an essentially non-functioning car heater.

*Ingi's Analysis: This is a wonderful example of why stopping and thinking at trick one is almost always a good idea. Plan ahead! Especially with a holding such as this, the risk of getting end-played is very real. The two lines discussed both work as the cards lie, and seem to differ mainly in elegance. I would personally always go with the flair, all things being equal! However, all things are **not** equal. Line A is, in my opinion, vastly superior. Why? Because we have a partner! In line B, West unnecessarily commits when he when he throws a ♦ on the fourth ♣, thereby forgoing all deals in which partner actually holds the ♦Q instead of the ♥Q. In line A, however, throwing a second ♠ does not commit yet (and you only need, and are only ever going to get, two ♠ tricks). This throws the ball to partner. He followed thrice in ♣, but **he's now out and can show us which Queen he has!** In the above hand, East simply discards a low ♦ (or a high ♥), denying the ♦Q. This allows West an informe discard of a ♦ on the fifth ♣. If East had had the ♦Q he would have instead thrown a low ♥ or a high ♦. This way, we beat them regardless of which Queen partner has. Don't forget: it's a partnership game!*

I like those odds! (Ingi Agnarsson)

Test your skills

In the last issue (April 1, 2018), we discussed the basic probabilities of card distributions; useful bridge odds. Using the information provided there, especially the tables of probabilities, see if you can find the *objectively best* play for the following hands, absent other information and ‘table presence’ (like the times when you pretend to reach for a pretzel to find that darn ♠Q).

Hand 1

♠10
♥J 3
♦A Q 2
♣A K Q 7 5 4 3

♠Q J 2
♥A K 7 5 4
♦J 10 5 4 3
♣-

You are South, playing 3NT with your favorite teammates. Last round, you took what looked like a ‘proven’ finesse for 2 extra tricks in 4♠, only to go down one in a laydown game. You’re looking forward to heading to Il Giovanni’s for a nice dinner of its piquant ‘pasta putanesca,’ paired with a delightful chianti, and sharing with your friends your exciting summer bridge plans. You’re NOT going to allow the dinner conversation to focus on the last hand’s ‘safety-play’ postmortem. East/West use standard leads, and West leads the ♠5, to East’s Ace. East returns the ♠3 West’s King. West leads the ♠4 East follows as you win your Queen. You have 7 top tricks. What is your best chance of securing both the contract, and the upper hand in the dinner conversation?

Hand 2

♠A K 6 5 4 3

♥9 5

♦3 2

♣9 8 7

♠7

♥K Q J 10

♦A K Q 10

♣A K Q 10

Still relishing last night's pasta putanesca (hijo e puta it was good!) and fun conversation, you sit down to the first hand of the morning session and pick up a 24-point hand! Life is good. After a 2♣ opener, and a positive response from partner, you end up in 6NT. Dummy lays down her hand and says, "Good luck, although you shouldn't need it." You stare at the unfriendly spade lead, and after a bit of thought, are reminded of your slight headache. Perhaps the fifth glass of chianti had been a mistake. As your Advil starts to kick in, you decide not to dwell on such minor details. You have a two loser hand, and partner has shown up with two tricks. You must have a good chance. How do you deliver the 12 tricks?

Hand 3

You made your 6NT, even though you had to close your eyes for a key moment in the play, and your headache has disappeared. The mouthwatering aroma of freshly baked garlic bread and grilled buttery lobster is starting to make its way to the playing area during the last round before lunch, as you pick up a nice distributional 15 count, and partner opens a strong 1NT. Everything seems to be going your way. With your nose fixed on the aroma, you decide to prepare for your lunch with an appetizing grand slam. Inspired bidding follows:

	Dealer North : Love all			
♠K J 4	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
♥A 5 4		1NT	Pass	2♠
♦A 8 7 6	Pass	3♣	Pass	3♠
♣K Q 7	Pass	4♣	Pass	4NT
	Pass	5♣	Pass	5♦
♠A Q 5 3	Pass	5♠	Pass	7♣
♥K J 3				
♦2				
♣A J 10 9 8				
	Bidding stayman and ‘figuring it out’ seems like what you might do at your regular club game, but things are going your way and you decide to be a bit more forceful.			

Your 2♠ is a transfer to ♣, followed by 3♣ natural and game forcing. You’d like to have 6♣ for this sequence, but you worry about ♦, and if you find a fit, perhaps...just perhaps... there might be a grand slam. If not, you can probably scramble to 6NT and hope for the best. Partner takes you for a distributional “pick a suit game” or a slam-ish hand, and with good 3-card support for both your suits, and with plenty of honors, plays along by supporting your longer suit. You happily ask for key cards, and get 5♣, showing 0 or 3. You now have enough for small slam, but what does it cost you to look for a miracle? Wasn’t that pasta putanesca a miracle in and by itself? 5♦ asks for ♣Q and North uses a sophisticated 5♠ to say “Yes, I have the ♣Q...and something extra in ♠.” You can pretty much count 12 tricks, and you can see some chances of a 13th. Things are going well, so you opt to go all in with 7♣. It’s not a stressful decision since the play is partner’s problem! You sit back with a satisfied ‘butter shrimp’ drivel coming out of your mouth as partner’s brain goes to work on all eight cylinders. What is the best line of play?

The ‘solutions’ will be published in the next (October 1, 2018) issue, and in the interim we STRONGLY ENCOURAGE letters discussing how you’d go about playing these hands and why. We’re putting in the hard work. Show us that you

care. Even if you don't send us a line, come up with a plan and see how it matches the suggested lines of play offered in the next issue.

Taking Advantage of the Opponents' Double of Your Artificial Bid (Mark Oettinger)

The opportunity to gain advantage from the opponents' double of your artificial bid arises in a wide variety of contexts. Here's a common example:

<p>♠ Q108763 ♥ 54 ♦ K76 ♣ Q4</p> <p>♠ AJ4 ♠ 9 ♥ 76 ♥ AK109 8</p> <p>♦ QJ9 ♦ 5432 ♣ 109632 ♣ K87</p> <p>♠ K52 ♥ QJ32 ♦ A108 ♣ AJ5</p>	<p>Board 3 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>West</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>North</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>East</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>South</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>2♥</td> <td>Dbl</td> <td>2♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td>All Pass</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>				1NT	Pass	2♥	Dbl	2♠	All Pass			
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>														
			1NT														
Pass	2♥	Dbl	2♠														
All Pass																	

East's Double is almost always lead directing, and East's ♥ should be good enough that he can be reasonably confident that North/South cannot make 2♥X. Absent the Double, South has only two possible bids: (a) accept the transfer by bidding 2♠; or (b) "superaccepting" by bidding 3♠ with 4♠ and 17 HCP. In the former case, South can have 2♠ or 3+ ♠, and can have any high card strength within the 15-17 HCP range. After East's Double, however, South has *five* options. He can bid 2♠, 2NT, 3♠, Pass, or Redouble. Typically, 2♠ ("accepting the transfer") shows 3+ ♠. 3♠ is still a superaccept. Passing shows only 2♠ (South must have 2♠ for his 1NT opening). The meaning of Redouble should be discussed with your partner, but one approach is that it shows 5♥ and a willingness to play 2♥X if responder holds 3-card ♥ support. A Redouble by South also typically denies a

third ♠(warning North that we may have better prospects defending then competing to the 3-level). The fifth option is 2NT, which should show something exactly like South has here, a slow double stopper in ♥, honor third (or more) in ♠ (you have to have the ability to play 3♠ against rubbish), and willingness to play a NT partscore or game against a decent and potentially running ♠suit. Note that on a ♥ lead, 3NT is unbeatable.

Here's another example. This one is in the context of a Splinter bid:

♠QJ104
♥A762
♦KQ65
♣4

♠AK965
♥K943
♦4
♣QJ5

S	W	N	E
1♠	P	4♣*	X
P**	P	4♥***	P
4♠	P	P	P

North's 4♣ bid is a Splinter, showing 4+ ♠ and a singleton or void ♣. East's Double is lead directing, probably with something like ♣AK. The rest of North/South's auction requires partnership agreement, but can (should?) be played as follows. South's Pass denies first-round ♣ control (i.e., it denies the ♣A or a ♣ void). North's 4♥ bid shows the ♥A, and denies a first round ♣ control). If either South or North had first round ♣ control, it would be his first priority to show it by Redoubling. Again, East's interposition of a lead directing Double allows North/South to exchange information that would not have been possible absent the

Double. This can make the difference in bidding a close slam, or in stopping below slam at a safe level.

Please Fill Out Your Convention Card(s) (Mark Oettinger) (Suggested for Newer Players)

The Laws of Duplicate Bridge require that both partners of every partnership have identically filled out convention cards available for the opponents to review prior to the play, during the auction, and during the clarification period. The reason for this rule is that we all have the right to know our opponents' bidding agreements. We also have the right to review their card(s) in order to acquaint ourselves with their agreements, rather than to ask them to explain them. This is often a wise approach, since it prevents our opponents from discovering that they have had a bidding misunderstanding. Consider the following example:

Partner opens 1NT, and RHO overcalls 2♦. You have the following hand:

♠J10952 ♥AQ10 ♦J75 ♣52

RHO's 2♦ bid can mean a variety of different things. If the opponents are playing Brozel, it shows ♦ and ♥. If they are playing Cappelletti, it shows ♥ and ♠. If they are playing DONT, it shows ♦ and one of the majors. And, it could be natural, showing ♦. Have you discussed with your partner what your various available bids would mean in this situation? Is X "Stolen Bid" (i.e., a ♥ transfer)? Is it for penalty? Is 2♥ a transfer to ♠? Is it natural? Do you play Lebensohl? If you haven't discussed these sequences, you should, and you should mark your agreements on your convention card. But, back to the question at hand.

Regardless of your methods, you want to know what RHO's 2♦ bid means in order to make an informed decision as to what to bid. How do you find out? Since it's your turn, you may ask. It is LHO, the *partner* of the 2♦ bidder, who must explain (if asked). *Should* you ask? The answer is almost certainly, "No." Instead, you should ask to see RHO's (*not* LHO's) convention card. Why? Because you want

to learn what RHO *intended* his bid to mean. Yes, he might have forgotten his partnership's agreement, but he's allowed to do that, and most of the time, RHO knows what their agreement is, and his card will (or *should*) reflect it accurately. So, most of the time, you will know what RHO has, and in addition, LHO may have forgotten, and may misinform you if you ask. Worse yet, if LHO does misinform you, RHO will now know what LHO incorrectly thinks RHO has. This is known as "unauthorized information," and RHO cannot ethically use that information. If he does, and he uses the information to his benefit, the director should award an adjusted score.

Aside from the fact that it's required, there are many benefits to having a fully filled out convention card with each of your regular partners. Not the least of these benefits is the work that goes into creating the convention card. The card is a wonderful roadmap for discussion. It takes perhaps 30 minutes to have a rather complete discussion of bidding systems with your partner, even if it's the first time you've met. It is also essential that you take a few minutes to look over the card before the start of a session, even if you've played with this particular partner on numerous occasions before.

You can actually go well beyond the face of the card itself in memorializing your agreements. Some partnerships have an extra page attached on the inside of their card where they note agreements that do not have a corresponding box or fill-in on the front side. An example might be: What's the difference between the two following sequences (opponents are passing): $1\clubsuit-1\diamond-1\heartsuit-1\spadesuit$ and $1\clubsuit-1\diamond-1\heartsuit-2\spadesuit$? Is $1\spadesuit$ in the first sequence "4th suit forcing?" If you play this sequence as 4th suit forcing, it generally does not guarantee $4\spadesuit$ (and in fact, some partnerships play that it denies them). And if it *is* 4th suit forcing, it generally calls for opener to bid the appropriate level of notrump with a \spadesuit stopper. Some partnerships have the agreement that this sequence is the exception to 4th suit forcing, and that it *does* show $4\spadesuit$. And after you've figured out how you want to play the first sequence, that should have an impact on the meaning of the second sequence. My point is this: regardless of what your agreements are, it behooves you to discuss them, and then to formalize them on your card. And if you don't find room on the card for a particular agreement, make a note of it elsewhere. Some partnerships have quite

extensive “system notes.” Jeff Meckstroth and Eric Rodwell anecdotally have 800 pages of them. A fully filled out card is thus a *necessary*...but possible not *sufficient*...body of disclosable information, as your opponents are entitled to be informed of *all* of your agreements.

Before we leave the subject, it is worth mentioning that you may *not* review your *own* convention card during the course of the auction or play. How many times has this happened to you. You pass, LHO passes, and partner opens 1♥. You haven't played with this partner a quite a while, and you didn't take the time to review the card before the round. You wonder, “Is partner's 1NT forcing after he passed at his first opportunity?” You *cannot* peek at your own card. “Memory aids” are forbidden. Gone are the days of the bridge tablecloth with the bidding “cheat sheet.” That's another reason why it's so important for you and your partners to spend the time to create, to keep current, and to regularly review, the convention card that you play.

Upcoming Events

Vermont Sectional
Burlington Bridge Club
600 Blair Park Road
Williston, VT
July 13, 14 & 15, 2018

Vermont Sectional
Burlington Bridge Club
600 Blair Park Road
Williston, VT
September 21, 22 & 23, 2018

Vermont Sectional
Quechee Base Lodge
3277 Quechee Main Street
Quechee, VT

October 26, 27 & 28, 2018

Vermont and Nearby Clubs

Lyndonville Bridge Club

**70 Depot Street
Colby Library
Lyndonville, Vermont 05851
Jeanie Clermont; (802) 684-2156
Saturday, 1:00 p.m.; semi-monthly; stratified**

Manchester and Mountains DBC

**3624 Main Street
Multi-Purpose Room
Manchester Village, Vermont 05254
Bob Smith; (802) 362-4224
Pat Homes; pathomes@comcast.net
Monday; 12:15 (12:30?) p.m.; June, July, August, September, October; stratified
Friday; 12:15 (12:30?) p.m.; open; stratified
Website: www.bridgewebs.com/manchestermountains/**

Manchester Equinox Village Open

**49 Maple Street
Manchester, Vermont 05254
Elizabeth VonRiesenfelder; (802) 362-5304
Tuesday; 1:00 p.m.; 0-200 MPs
Tuesday; 1:00 p.m.; open, stratified
Sunday; 2:00 p.m.; February, March; open; stratified
*Multiple sites; call first; reservations requested***

Taconic Card Club

**2282 Depot Street
Manchester, Vermont 05255
Kim Likakis; (802) 379-1867**

Thursday; 12:45 p.m.; open; reservations requested

Apollo Bridge Club

**115 Main Street
Montpelier, Vermont 05602
Wayne Hersey; (802) 223-3922
Friday; 6:30 p.m.; open**

Newport Club

**84 Fyfe Street
Newport Center, Vermont 05855
Eric McCann; (802) 988-4773
Wednesday; 1:00 p.m.; exc. Jan, May, Oct, Nov, Dec; open; stratified**

Barton Bridge Club

**34 School Street
Orleans, Vermont 05860
Linda Aiken; (802) 525-4617
Monday; 12:30 p.m.; open; stratified**

Rutland Duplicate Bridge Club

**66 South Main Street
Christ the King Church
Rutland, Vermont 05701
Raymond Lopes; (802) 779-2538
Monday, 12:00 Noon; open; stratified
Tuesday; 6:00 p.m.; open; stratified
Thursday; 6:00 or 6:30 p.m. (*time changes seasonally...call first*); open; stratified
*Multiple sites - call first for locations***

St. Albans DBC

**75 Messenger Street
St. Albans, Vermont 05478
Marsha Anstey; (802) 524-3653**

Monday; 7:00 p.m.; open

Burlington Bridge Club

600 Blair Park Road

Williston, Vermont 05495

Phil Sharpsteen; (802) 999-7767

Monday; 6:30 p.m.; 0-500 MPs; stratified

Tuesday; 7:00 p.m.; open; stratified

Wednesday; 9:15 a.m.; open; stratified

Wednesday; 1:30 p.m. 0-20 MPs; strat'd; *may resume Fall; pre-reg. & part. req'd*

Friday; 9:15 a.m.; open; stratified

Sunday; 1PM; open; semi-mo. exc. May, June, July, Aug; strat.; *call/check web*

Website: www.bridgewebs.com/burlingtonacademy/

Norwich DBC

43 Lebanon Street

Hanover, New Hampshire 03755

Michael Morris; (401) 215-4135

Tuesday; 6:30 p.m.; open; stratified

Eastman Bridge Club

57 Hanover Street

Knights of Columbus Hall

Lebanon, New Hampshire 03766

Jane Verdrager; (603) 865-5508

Tuesday; 1:00 p.m.; open; stratified; singles welcome/partner guar'd (Tues only)

Wednesday; 1:00 p.m.; open; stratified (partner not guaranteed for singles)

Friday; 1:00 p.m.; open; stratified (partner not guaranteed for singles)

Keene DBC

Elks Lodge

81 Roxbury Street

Keene, New Hampshire 03431

Anne McCune; (603) 352-2751

Monday; 12:00 Noon; open; stratified (partner available)

Thursday; 12:00 Noon; open; stratified (no partner guaranteed)

Ticonderoga (New York) DBC

109 Champlain Avenue

Ticonderoga, New York 12883

Michael Rogers; (518) 585-3322

Monday; 12:30 p.m.; open; stratified; reservations requested

Thursday; 12:30 p.m.; open; stratified; reservations requested

Plattsburgh (New York) DBC

5139 North Catherine Street

Plattsburgh, New York 12901

George Cantin; (518) 563-6639

Tuesday; 6:45 p.m.; open; handicap

Thursday; 6:45 p.m.; open

Friday; 12:30 p.m.; open

Useful & Fun Links

ACBL

www.acbl.org

District 25

www.nebridge.org

Unit 175

www.vermontbridge.org

Bridge Base Online

www.bridgebase.com

OKBridge

www.okbridge.com

Bridge Guys

www.bridgeguys.com

Pattaya Bridge Club

www.pattayabridge.com

Larry Cohen

www.larryco.com

Mike Lawrence

<https://michaelslawrence.com/>

Marty Bergen

www.martybergen.com

Baron Barclay Bridge Supply

www.baronbarclay.com

Michael's Bridge Sanctuary

www.mapiano.com/bridge.htm

Power Rankings

www.coloradospringsbridge.com/PR_FILES/PR.HTM

+++++