

This last Friday at the Amari was a bit of a record recently in that we had 5 full tables (with me left over). Unfortunately, we all get wiser as we get older, and Chuck managed to manipulate himself into a stationary seat with his back to a pillar so that I was unable to kibitz him. No matter, I still got plenty of material.

### A Complete Mis-fit.

Now there are a few golden rules once that you discover you have a glorious mis-fit: -

- 1) bail out – preferably in the partnership's longest suit, A.S.A.P.
- 2) NEVER play in no-trumps.
- 3) it is usually best for the weaker hand to be declarer, as otherwise there may be problems getting to his hand.

This is Board 3 from Friday.		Pairs A and B		Pair C	
West	East	West	East	West	East
♠ -	♠ KQ109842	1♥	1♠	1♥	1♠
♥ AK10854	♥ -	2♣	2♠	2♣	2♠
♦ J102	♦ Q973	3♥	3♠	3♥	4♠
♣ AK94	♣ 82	3NT	pass	4NT	5♣
				pass	

This hand should be played in ♠'s, so who was at fault? Obviously the first 4 bids are OK (but many would prefer 2♥ as West's first rebid), but what about West's 3♥. This obviously shows a non-min with 6♥'s. I suppose this is reasonable, but I would pass 2♠. Partner's bidding (2♠ is encouraging but not forcing) has not improved your hand any; it smells of a mis-fit. Anyway, I guess 3♥ is not unreasonable; but what after partner's 3<sup>rd</sup> ♠ bid? Pass is a must. It is a total mis-fit. Partner has bid ♠'s three times and you have shown your shape. Leave it there. Under no circumstances bid NT. What happens in real life? 3NT was reached twice (and West attempted to play in 4NT the third time!). Sure, you have all suits stopped, but where are the tricks coming from? Dummy makes zero tricks (six less than if the contract was in ♠'s!). 3NT was minus 2. 5♣ was more disastrous. As the cards lay 4♠ makes if you guess to play the ♠K then ♠Q (the jack is doubleton), but the correct contract is 2(or 3)♠.

West was at fault. He should probably pass 2♠ but should certainly pass next go.

### Weak Twos

- ♠ 942 These are generally 6-10 points with a 6 card suit. How about Board 9
  - ♥ KJ8643 from Friday, would you open with a weak 2♥, 1<sup>st</sup> seat with favourable
  - ♦ 73 vulnerability? Certainly! This hand is ideal. What actually happened?
  - ♣ Q5 This hand passed, opponents bid to 3NT making +3. An initial ♥ lead
- is needed to restrict the contract to 9 tricks; and partner had no reason to lead ♥Q from ♥Q2 unless you bid the suit.

## The Opening 1NT Bid

The opening bid of 1NT must have a clearly defined range, usually 3 points (e.g. 15-17 or 12-14). You may digress outside this range (+- 1 point) if the 'balance' of the hand, intermediates etc dictate. A NT bid of 2 or more points outside the advertised range is considered unacceptable, as is opening 1NT with a singleton. If you do this repeatedly and the director is called, then you will get an adjusted (unfavourable) score. So please simply bid what your system dictates. 15-17 means just that, 15 to 17 points (+- 1 if the hand warrants it).

First of all, let's start with a 'complaint' made by one of our leading players. Guess who? But, actually, I *totally* agree with Chuck. All partnerships have an agreed range for an opening 1NT (usually 15-17) – *please stick to it*. Repeated digressions could be construed as cheating. Now as you are all aware, I am a firm advocate of hand evaluation, and there are 'good' 14 and 'bad' 18 counts which are fine for a 1NT opener. Consider the following hands, three of which come from Friday: -

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C	Hand D	Hand E
♠ KQ98	♠ KJ9	♠ AK6	♠ AQ7	♠ AK5
♥ K874	♥ K10	♥ KQ	♥ 107	♥ K1098
♦ J5	♦ AK1097	♦ KQJ	♦ AKQ84	♦ QJ7
♣ AK5	♣ 1087	♣ 86542	♣ K93	♣ AKJ

Hand A is a classic 1NT opener. You do not promise a stop in every suit when you open 1NT.

Hand B has only 14 high card points, but I would open 1NT. The decent 5 card suit, good intermediates and two kings that need 'protecting' all cry out for a 1NT opener.

Hand C is the exact opposite. If you can think of a 'garbage' 18 count, then this is it! It has no intermediates, all the points are in short suits and the long suit can hardly be called a suit. 1NT is certainly not an overbid on this hand.

Hand D is a hand from Friday that 'upset' Chuck. It opened 1NT (15-17). Now Chuck is one of these very annoying players who count the points during the play. If you have opened 1NT (15-17) and have already turned up with 15 points during the play, then Chuck will not play you for the missing king! He seems to get annoyed when this happens. Now most of us mere mortals lose count after 3 or 4 rounds of play (or do not even start counting), and so we cannot comprehend how annoying this must be for Chuck. So, just to humour him, can we please be vaguely realistic when bidding NT. This particular hand (Hand D) has far too much playing strength for a 1NT opener. Open 1♦ and subsequently jump in NT (showing 18-19 pts). Or, alternatively, state your actual opening range (15-18, 16-18, 15-21?, or whatever it really is).

Hand E is also from Friday, and I witnessed no less than 3 opening bids! Obviously the correct opening bid is 2NT (20-22 points). One player opened 2♣ and rebid 2NT (promising 23-24?). Another player actually opened 1NT (luckily not at Chuck's table).

Please do not open 1NT with hands that are way outside your declared opening 1NT range. It really does make it a lottery for everybody at the table, and a nightmare for me if somebody calls the director. I do not get paid enough for these sorts of headaches.

Incidentally, I mentioned a few weeks back that 3<sup>rd</sup> seat should often open 'light'. This does not apply to a 1NT opener. An opening 1NT in 3<sup>rd</sup> seat needs to be well up to strength and opening a weak NT in 3<sup>rd</sup> seat is very dangerous – I would not do it at teams or rubber Bridge.

## A New Suit at the two level

Now I was just directing the session, and I was called over by Chuck after he had completed bidding board 24. Suspecting the normal lead out of turn, revoke or whatever (by opps), I was relieved to know that he just wanted me to comment on his bidding. Partner opens 1♦ and RHO bids 1♥.

- What do you bid? Now this is a theme that I have been developing over the last few news-sheets. There really is just one sensible bid – Chuck's 1NT. A two level bid (2♣ or 2NT) may well get your partnership too high. Normally 2NT is recommended with 11 points, but this hand is not worth 11 points – you should deduct a point for the totally flat shape.
- ♠ Q87
  - ♥ A73
  - ♦ K109
  - ♣ Q742

Simple common sense really, but I would not have covered this hand if I had not just seen it bid at Hans' table. Hans' partner again opened 1♦ but this time RHO doubled. Now there are more 'reasonable' options. Pass, re-dbl, 1NT, 2♣, 2♦ or 2NT. Hans, Chuck and myself had a lively discussion at the end of the session! Now I have very strong feelings about this. I would always bid 1NT. When you can describe your hand in one go – then do so! Pass (letting LHO bid his best major) has no merit whatsoever. Redouble shows 9+ points; generally no fit with partner and a desire to double the opponents in at least one of their majors. This flat heap does not qualify. This is, I guess, the 2<sup>nd</sup> best bid; all other options get zero brownie points, including Hans' choice of 2♣. 2♣ here is a weak bid, 6-9 points, a mis-fit for partner and a good 5+ card ♣ suit. I guess that you could play it as ignoring the double (11+ points) – but that is certainly not standard (re-double).

This brings me on to what I think is a fatal flaw in the 'Dutch Acol' philosophy (no double): – responding in a new suit at the two level with a flat 10 or 11 points. This is not a good idea – especially if you play 4 card majors – as opener's rebid may be 2NT on a flat 12 or 13 points. Quite how the Dutch are such a good international team really baffles me if they adopt this policy. I am afraid to say that I believe that the Americans are light-years ahead by playing 2/1 (Actually, I believe that many Dutch internationals play 2/1). I guess Hans is good enough to make 2NT when the rest of us struggle in 1NT, but why make life difficult? Incidentally, you will hardly ever miss 3NT as if you have a poor 10-11 points, you will only make 3NT if partner could have opened a strong NT. Those of you who know me will know that I spend most of my life reading Bridge books – and a small % sinks in. I can certainly find plenty of material that states that a new suit at the two level on 10-11 points is losing Bridge – it is not just me. If you really like to respond at the two level with weak hands, then take up the weak NT (where you only need about 9 points).

## DONT

So what is DONT. Yes, I know that it was a 1958 Elvis hit (Don't, baby don't say don't) but these days it is a defence to opponent's 1NT opening. Basically, somebody thought that a penalty double of opponents strong NT is not needed and so double is used conventionally. I don't like DONT – why should you not be able to double opponents? Let's look at hand 23 from Friday: -

Both vul: dealer	West	West	North	East	South
	♠ AK74	pass	pass	1NT (1)	2♥ (2)
E	♥ Q2	pass	2♠	pass	2NT
S	♦ A1042	pass	pass	pass	
	♣ Q62				

- ♠ 83  
♥ AKJ64  
♦ KQ7  
♣ K75
- (1) Perhaps a dubious 1NT opener, vul in 3<sup>rd</sup> seat? (but OK if opponents play DONT !)
- (2) This hand is unbiddable playing DONT. You simply have to pass and collect an undoubled penalty. Double (playing DONT) is a one-suited hand and 'forces' partner to bid and does not promise such a strong hand.

Anyway, South made the poor (and systematically incorrect) bid of 2♥ which North (correctly) alerted as ♥'s and ♠'s. North corrected to 2♠ and South retreated into 2NT. He made +2. Now playing in 2NT after opponents have opened 1NT really is silly. Assuming you make, then you score +120 as opposed to +500 that you get for doubling the opponents. Making 2NT + 2 is even more silly; why not collect the 1100 penalty? Wouldn't it have been nice to have chalked up +1100 against Hans and Joe?

So, the conclusion? Only overcall over 1NT with shapely hands. Flat hands (like this one) either pass or double (for penalties). Do not play DONT. Multi-Landy really is far superior (Chris, Hans and myself all play this). I will describe it in a later news-sheet. (*Editor's note: news-sheet 15*). Some more experienced players play Multi-Landy (or similar – Hamilton/Cappelletti) directly over the 1NT bidder and DONT in the protective seat (as a penalty double is less likely when under the opener) or by a passed hand. Excellent I guess – as long as you and your partner have good memories.