

Last week's winners: Monday 22/6/03

Friday 26/6/03

1 st	Jon/Ian	62 %	Hans/John(UK) beat Garry/John(UK/Aus)
2 nd	Hans/Clive	57%	no printable results as only 7 players..

Please support the Friday club. Numbers are low now, and if we do not turn up at the Amari then we will lose it as a venue. It really is a pleasant place to play, especially for non-smokers. You may recall that we had 7 tables there in Jan/Feb, so no problem in the peak season but we really need the residents to keep it up (you know what I mean) in this low season.

DOPI (Double 0 Pass 1)

It does not matter if you play 4♣ or 4NT to ask for aces (or key cards), if the opponents bid over your asking bid then obviously things change. This happened on Friday 19th and a lay-down 7NT (13 tricks off the top) was missed.

Let's assume you are playing simple Blackwood, you have 2 aces and partner bids 4NT to ask. Your response is 5♥, but what if your RHO sticks in a bid of 5♦? The answer is the DOPI convention: -

Double	=	1 st step	(0 aces)
Pass	=	2 nd step	(1 ace)
Next bid (so 5♥ here)	=	3 rd step	(2 aces)
Next but 1 bid (5♠)	=	4 th step	etc.

The same principle applies if you play RKCB, Gerber or whatever. Note that the lower responses (double or pass) allow for a possibility of defending against a doubled contract by opponents. Often a good idea if you are short of aces/key cards!

If RHO doubles the asking bid, then there is a similar convention (ROPI)

Redouble	=	1 st step	(0 aces)
Pass	=	2 nd step	(1 ace)
Next bid (so 5♣ here)	=	3 rd step	(2 aces) etc.

Now I have been careful to mention steps here. For example, If you play standard RKCB then 1st step = 0 or 3 key cards, 2nd step = 1 or 4 key cards etc.

Responding to Partner's Negative Double

Hand A You have this hand and open the obvious 1♦. There is absolutely no problem and you can cope with any bid from partner. If partner bids 1♥, you simply rebid 2♣. But what if LHO overcalls 1♠ and partner doubles negative, promising 4 (maybe 5) ♥'s? What now? Simple, you just respond the same as if partner had bid 1♥. So in this case, rebid 2♣.

♠ 52	
♥ Q2	
♦ KQ876	
♣ AQ65	Do not pass.

A new Suit at the Two Level

I can be quoted as saying that one of the many advantages of playing a weak NT is that a two-level new suit response requires only 8 points instead of the 11 needed when playing a strong 1NT. I was asked to explain why.

For example, 1♥ - 2♦. Why does this require 11 points but only 8 playing a weak NT?

Nobody has bid No Trumps, so why does it matter? The answer lies not in the strength of you opening 1NT, but in the strength of your NT rebid (and so obviously directly connected). If opener's rebid is NT (so 12-14 playing a strong NT but 15-16 playing a weak NT) then this 2♦ bid has to be strong enough to cope with a rebid of 2NT by opener. This 2NT rebid still shows 12-14 (strong NT) or 15-16 (weak NT). You (the 2♦ bidder) have pushed the bidding up to the two level and must anticipate this 2NT rebid. Playing a strong NT opener may have 12-14 and so you need 11+ to be safe at the 2NT level. Playing a weak NT a 2NT rebid here shows 15-16 points and so a decent 8 is adequate for a two level response.

Denying a 4 card major

I guess everybody (including me) is fed up with this theme recurring week after week after week after week? Perhaps when people start getting this right then I can move on to pastures new?

Hand 17W This is West hand 17 from Friday. Partner opens 1♣, what is your reply?
1♥ is so obvious that it hardly warrants a mention in the news-sheet. The
♠ J1052 holder chose 1NT. This really is the epitome of poor bidding. Not just
♥ KJ62 denying one major suit, but two! And with a singleton in the unbid suit!!
♦ Q Please, Please, Please do not deny a 4 card major in situations like this,
♣ Q652 let alone two! 4 card majors should be bid up the line, so respond 1♥ here.
OK, time for a sensible bid: -

Hand 1E Hand 1 East from Friday. I was playing with Clive. Clive held this hand
and heard me open 1♣. He responded 1♠ and my 1NT (15-16) ended the
♠ 10974 auction. A good contract. After the hand, Clive asked my opinion of his
♥ K108 1♠ bid (rather than 1NT) on this flat hand. Now Clive has read all of my
♦ KJ10 news-sheets and knows my opinion; he just wanted confirmation that his
♣ 854 bid of 1♠ is correct even with a totally flat hand with no honours in the
suit. My opinion? Absolutely! Although not everybody agrees with me.

When the partner ship has less than about 28 points, it is virtually never better to play in NT rather than a 4-4 major suit fit. This is particularly true in part-score contracts: -

This page is extracted from a book regarding the similar situation where opener has opened 1♣ or 1♦, his partner has bid 1♥ and opener has to consider whether to bid 1♠ with his flat 13 count (strong NT) with 4 ♠'s, or to bid 1NT: -

Do we bid our major or always charge into 1NT as quickly as possible with 4333 shape? Now just about every book you read says that you should bid 1NT; and there are similar variations on this theme. For example, if you hold 4333 or 3433 shape with invitational values after partner opens 1NT, numerous experts recommend forgetting Stayman and bidding a direct (invitational) 2NT. Can all these guys really be wrong? Let us consider some quite plausible hands. Consider an auction 1♣/♦ - 1♥ - ? playing a strong NT, so a 12-14 1NT rebid (the argument is exactly the same for a weak NT). The auction has gone 1♣ - 1♥ - ?

West	East (1)	East (2)	East (3)	East (4)	East (5)
♠ J532	♠ A1074	♠ AKQ9	♠ 9874	♠ AK109	♠ A984
♥ 652	♥ AJ84	♥ 9864	♥ AJ93	♥ J843	♥ Q843
♦ AK5	♦ 763	♦ 73	♦ J63	♦ 73	♦ 3
♣ AJ6	♣ 83	♣ 843	♣ 83	♣ 843	♣ 9743

Clearly, 2♠ is a far superior contract in all the examples, the quality of the ♠ suit being totally irrelevant. If opener replies 1NT the ♠ fit will never be found as East is too weak to bid again. In fact, I don't think that I can construct a balanced hand where 1NT is better. Why is that? If opener is 4333 and responder is 44 in the majors, then defenders have an 8 card and a 7 card suit in which to attack. If the 8 carder is split 5-3 or worse, you have real problems. Anyway, isn't finding the 4-4 major fit the major task of any bidding system? I'm sorry, but I simply cannot see any logic in denying a 4 card major and then changing your mind during some convoluted checkback Stayman (or new minor forcing) sequence. (The main reason that checkback Stayman is so convoluted is this requirement to find out if opener has suppressed a 4 card major). So, we never deny 4 card majors.

Before we continue with the next section, I must make an important point. I believe that I have convincingly demonstrated that with a 4-4 fit, 2 of a major is better than 1NT. However, that does mean that 4 of a major is always better than 3NT. The main difference is that for NT to be the best contract, you need all outside suits to be well stopped. At the 1NT or 2♥/♠ level, our side simply cannot have enough points to cover all suits adequately. The case for playing in 3NT is fully explained in chapter 10; it is a sign of excellent bidding if you can locate a 4-4 fit and then subsequently play in a superior contract of 3NT.

I guess that some experts may be able to deny a 4 card major, go through checkback Stayman, admit to having one and subsequently still be able to play in 3NT. We will leave that to the experts. Our system is much simpler and we play in the superior suit contract if there is no game.