

Last week's winners: Monday 6/10/03

Friday 10/10/03

1st Jeff/Alex 63%
2nd Clive/Ken 61%

1st Jeff/Alex 62%
2nd Hans/Jan 61%

Well done Jeff/Alex. Perhaps you could try to remember your pair numbers next time? The management have finally got the air conditioning working at Soi 4. Just 5 tables on Monday when we had 4 at the smaller Friday club, perhaps the lack of air had something to do with it? Anyway, numbers are on the up now and it will soon be peak season.

And what can we say about Arnold? Guess that America is fed up with cowboys and wants a real man? I would not buy any shares in American colleges teaching politics – who needs an education in the USA? Brute strength and ignorance? Whether it's internal 'elections' or foreign policy, that's all that counts, right? And, of course, money (and oil).

Bidding Quiz

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A you are playing 5 card majors. Partner opens 1♥, what is your response?
♠ 965	♠ 109	
♥ Q93	♥ AQ	With Hand B RHO opens 1♥, what is your bid?
♦ K964	♦ QJ532	
♣ A53	♣ AQJ6	
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C RHO opens 1♠ and you double. LHO redoubles and this is passed round to you. What do you do?
♠ 32	♠ A9	
♥ K952	♥ AQJ7	You are lucky enough to be dealt Hand D. What do you open?
♦ AKQ	♦ AKQ65	
♣ J1085	♣ 103	
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E you are playing Standard American and open 1♥. Partner responds 1NT. Do you bid on or pass?
♠ J743	♠ J652	
♥ AK1072	♥ K103	With Hand F RHO opens 1♣. What action, if any, do you take?
♦ A8	♦ A3	
♣ KJ	♣ AJ63	
Hand G	Hand H	With Hand G partner opens a strong NT. Do you transfer or use Stayman?
♠ KJ1085	♠ AK98	
♥ AJ98	♥ AQ	With Hand H partner opens 2♥ (weak, non-vul) in 2 nd seat. RHO overcalls 2♠, what is your bid? Hint:
♦ A	♦ A10984	Do not double, that is penalties and you will not get rich.
♣ 632	♣ 102	

At King Arthur's Court

King Arthur's chief chef had a pet goldfish which he kept in a bowl on the kitchen scales. One unhappy day the goldfish died and the chef put his arm into the bowl to retrieve the dead fish. He noticed that the water level rose, but did the weight shown on the scales increase or not?

The Power of the 4-4 Fit

Board 5 from Monday 6th

North	South (G)	West	North	East	South
♠ AQ72	♠ KJ1085	-	1NT (1)	pass	2♣ (2)
♥ KQ103	♥ AJ98	pass	2♥	pass	4♥ (3)
♦ 876	♦ A	pass	pass	pass	
♣ A7	♣ 632				

(1) 15-17.

(2) Stayman. This is preferable to a transfer when 5-4 in the majors.

(3) It is not easy for South to investigate slam. Perhaps 4♦ (a cuebid/splinter/whatever)?

This was the bidding at two tables where N-S played a strong NT. South bid game when the fit was uncovered and 12 tricks were made when ♥'s are trumps. Note that if you play in the 5-4 ♠ fit, then this makes one trick less. That is because the losing ♣ can be tossed on a long ♠ if ♥'s are trumps. That's what I keep saying, the 4-4 fit is golden and is sometimes even better than a 5-4 fit.

If South had transferred instead of using Stayman, then North would doubtless have super- accepted and the ♥ fit may have been lost.

Anyway, 4 pairs found the ♥ fit on Friday (with just 1 pair in a silly 3NT – quite how you can miss **two** enormous major suit fits is beyond me). Two pairs actually bid 6♥ (good stuff John/Dave, Don/Sid). 6♥ is easier to reach playing Acol (as these two pairs do) as North opens 1♥ and South immediately thinks of slam and has plenty of room to investigate. The 'Fruit Machine' Swiss convention, 4♣ by East showing a sound raise to 4♥ plus two aces and a feature (in this case a singleton) would work admirably. Swiss is mainly used by Acol players, Standard American players generally prefer the Jacoby 2NT convention. You can, actually, play both – with Jacoby 2NT being stronger. Simply jumping into Blackwood works on this deal of course.

As it happens with this hand, slam is always there (by means of two ♦ ruffs in the South hand), so 13 tricks are there in ♥'s but just 12 tricks in ♠'s.

Inviting after Partner Opens with a Weak TwoBoard 14 from Friday 10th , love all

North (H)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ AK98	♠ 2	-	-	pass	2♥ (1)
♥ AQ	♥ K98743	2♠	3♥ (2)	pass	pass
♦ A10984	♦ Q7	pass			
♣ 102	♣ J863				

- (1) Weak. The 'body' in the ♥ suit makes this a pretty ideal pre-empt.
 (2) I guess that this was meant as invitational?

I was South and wound up making 11 tricks. Game is perhaps not certain from North's point of view (maybe it depends upon how sound your partner's pre-empts are? Or perhaps how good a declarer he is?). So, what went wrong?

If you play weak two's then the 2♥ opening is pretty clear-cut. The 3♥ bid at (2) is simply raising the pre-empt. Unlike when partner opens one of a suit, a raise of a pre-empt is always weak (unless you bid game, of course, when it may be either weak or strong). If you play Ogust over weak twos then this is the way to find out if partner is max or not; you have to decide if 2NT after a 2♠ overcall is still Ogust (I would assume it was). Anyway, when partner opens a weak two, any new suit is natural and forcing, 2NT is Ogust, 3 of the major is pre-emptive and 4 of the major is to play (it may be weak or strong, only you know!) and double (of 2♠ here) would be for penalties. With this particular North hand you could take the conservative approach (bid 2NT) or simply bid 4♥. I prefer 4♥.

So, fully expecting a bottom board (I was the first to play this board) I decided to write it up. Upon inspecting the traveller at home I discovered that this was the only + score for N-S and so missing game made no difference! What happened? One pair bid 4♥ but went two off, another pair played in 3♦ (minus two) by North and the last table allowed West to buy the contract in 2♠ (making +2). Shame on you (you last two anonymous pairs). I think the 2♥ opening is obvious so the final contract should be 3♥ or 4♥. I don't have their bidding, perhaps it's best kept a secret?

The 2NT openerBoard 16 from Monday 6th

North (D)

South

♠ A9 ♠ J7653
♥ AQJ7 ♥ 1065
♦ AKQ65 ♦ 83
♣ 102 ♣ A74

Table A:

West	North	East	South
pass	2NT (1)	pass	3♥ (2)
pass	3♠	pass	3NT (3)
all pass			

- (1) 20-22
(2) transfer
(3) just 5 ♠'s

Table B:

West	North	East	South
pass	1♦	all pass	

First of all, the bidding. Whether you open the North hand 1♦ or 2NT is perhaps personal preference. I would open 2NT. The bidding to game is then straightforward. At table B the game was missed. Anyone to blame? Perhaps not, but I would never pass 1♦ with that South hand (but many would – I'm not going into that again). 3NT was reached at 3 tables on Monday but 4♠ by North was reached at one. Obviously via a transfer, but at (3) it is incorrect to bid 4♠; 3NT tells opener that you have 5 ♠'s and gives him the choice. Mind you, 3NT is by no means that good a contract and 1♦ will be better on a bad lie of the card(s): -

So then, onto the play. Looks like everybody got it right as 3NT made on all 3 occasions. On a ♣ lead you have to make a decision. It does not help to hold up, so win ♣A, and then what? If opponents regain the lead then they will cash enough ♣ tricks to set you. You will not get to dummy again, so tackle the ♦'s or the ♥'s? This is all about the odds. The ♥ finesse is 50% and the odds of a 3-3 split in ♦'s is 35%. You cannot combine the chances, so finesse. If the finesse fails, then you would have been better off playing in 1♦!

When LHO Redoubles

When you double an opening bid this is generally for take-out with shortage in the suit bid. If LHO redoubles and this is passed round to you, you are usually in trouble. LHO's redouble has advertised the balance of power and partner's failure to act simply says that he does not have a 5 card suit to rescue you into. When the redouble is passed round to you, you cannot pass – that is asking for a huge minus. You must bid; bid any 5 card suit, otherwise bid your cheapest 4 carder. Let's look at **two** such disasters from Monday 6th :-

Board 19 from Monday 6th , E-W vulnerable.

West 19 (C) RHO opened 1♠ and this hand doubled. Four ♥'s and support for all unbid suits – double is fine. LHO redoubled and this was passed round to this hand – it passed! The opponents wrapped up an easy 9 tricks – that is 920 away. 4♠ was bid at all the other tables. Whether 4♠ made or not is irrelevant (it was marginal) – minus 920 is a cold bottom. This hand cannot pass the redouble, bid 2♣. 2♥ is OK but I prefer 2♣.

♠ 32
♥ K952
♦ AKQ
♣ J1085

Board 1 from Monday 6th , Love all.

South 1 (F) RHO opened 1♣ and this hand doubled. Reasonable?
NO. A take-out double should be short in the suit bid and playable in the other 3 suits. This hand should pass. The people who think that you should double with any opening hand are 100 years out-of-date. This deal is an example of why. Partner did not have 4♠'s and you are up the creek without a paddle. Even so, you cannot pass 1♣ redoubled. It made + 3 for 830 away. Game by opponents was dicey, 3NT either made or went one off.

♠ J652
♥ K103
♦ A3
♣ AJ63

The bottom line. Unless you are happy with conceding these huge scores when opponents cannot even make game, then don't double on unsuitable hands and do not pass redoubles.

How Many Points for Stayman?

Board 2 from Friday 10th

When partner opens 1NT then 2♣ is Stayman, asking for a 4 card major suit. But how many points does responder need to have to bid Stayman? The answer is that it depends. No, I am not a politician, that is the correct answer. In principle, you need invitational values to bid Stayman (so 8 pts if you play a Strong NT and 11 pts if you play a weak NT). There are a few exceptions when you can bid 'garbage' Stayman with lesser values. I have covered these in earlier news-sheets, but they are the exception rather than the rule.

West 2 This was my bidding partner's hand on Friday. I opened 1NT and this Hand bid 2♣, Stayman. It would work out fine if opener bids 2♠, but the odds are against that! There is no recourse if partner bids 2♦ or 2♥. This hand must pass 1NT. What happened? Partner bid 2♦ and this hand then bid 2NT. That is invitational, promising 8 pts when playing a strong NT. Luckily partner (me) was minimum and so passed 2NT. 2NT went minus one. So a bottom? Not quite, one E-W pair actually managed to bid to 3♠ by East with the 3-4 fit! How?? Anyway, do not bid Stayman unless you are happy with any reply.

♠ Q987
♥ 832
♦ K53
♣ J43

Support with Support

Board 8 from Monday 6th

West (E)	East (A)	West (me)	North	East (Hans)	South
♠ J743	♠ 965	1♥ (1)	pass	1NT (2)	pass
♥ AK1072	♥ Q93	pass (3)	pass		
♦ A8	♦ K964				
♣ KJ	♣ A53				

An easy game was missed (West actually made 10 tricks in NT). Who's fault? Should West bid on over 1NT? Did East make the incorrect response? Let's see: -

- (1) A semi-balanced 16 count. A strong NT is worth considering, but it is generally accepted not to open 1NT with 9 cards in the majors. Thus 1♥ is fine.
- (2) A balanced 9 count so 1NT? No. With Qxx you should support partner's 5 card major. 1NT is often a 'courtesy bid' and generally denies 3 card support, especially Qxx! 2♥ is more constructive than 1NT and is certainly correct with 9 pts.
- (3) Should West make a try (with 2NT)? Perhaps fairly close on first inspection, but not really. The raise to 2NT shows 17-18 points. This is a reasonable 16 but no more; partner has denied three ♥'s to the Q or J and the suits outside ♥'s all need downgrading. Pass is the only sensible bid.

But what if East had bid 2♥ at (2)? Then it's a different story. With support opposite, this West hand is worth a game try. 2NT is best and East should either bid 3NT or 4♥. So, the bidding should be: -

1♥ - 2♥ - 2NT - 3NT (or 4♥ if you prefer). The Moral: Do not suppress support for opener's major.

The Strong NT is Better?

Now in previous news-sheets I have indicated the superiority of the weak NT in various scenarios. It is, of course, all swings and roundabouts. This sequence 1x - 1NT - 2NT is not very satisfactory; the problem is that the 1NT bid may be anything from 6 pts to a poor 10 pts. When you have a balanced 15 or 16 as opener you should pass, but you will occasionally miss game. This is not usually a problem playing a strong NT as most 15-16 balanced hands would have opened 1NT to start with. The exception, however, is the hand type we have here. With points for a 1NT opening but with 5 ♥'s and 4 ♠'s you have the problem. Tough. With 5 ♠'s and 4 ♥'s there is no problem; open 1♠ and rebid 2♥. You cannot rebid 2♠ with the hand given as that would be a reverse, forcing.

At King Arthur's Court - Solution

The 'weight' of the tank increases. Suppose his arm has a volume of 1000cc, then this displaces 1 litre of water and the scales register an equivalent increase in weight. Another way of looking at it: - when you put your arm (or whole body or whatever) into water, it weighs less, so where does the weight go?

Ian says that Merlin was correct about the three coins. Was he? I guess that a degree in maths says nothing if I get something like this wrong? But did I?

Overcall or Double or What?

Board 12 from Monday 6th, N-S vul.

North	South (B)	West	North	East	South
♠ AQJ84	♠ 109	pass	pass	1♥	2♦ (1)
♥ 53	♥ AQ	pass	pass (2)	pass	pass
♦ K106	♦ QJ532	pass			
♣ 1085	♣ AQJ6				

An easy 3NT game was missed. Who's fault? I did not play this hand, but was called over by two experienced players and asked to comment. I said not to tell me the complete bidding, but just give me the hand in question. I was given the South hand and asked what to do over the 1♥ opening from RHO. I overcalled 1NT. There was a pregnant silence! It appears that this bid had not come under consideration. One thought that 2♦ was correct and the other thought that the South hand should double.

First of all, let's clear double out of the way. A double of 1♥ usually promises 4♠'s or a *very* good hand (such that you bid again if partner responds in ♠'s). This is not a *very* good hand and cannot double. This hand is nowhere near strong enough to double and then bid ♦'s; and double followed by NT shows 19+ points.

So then, 2♦? N-S were vulnerable and so this should show a decent hand. A vulnerable 2 level overcall should be close to an opening bid. What's more, it is usually a 6 card suit or a good 5 carder (especially if a minor). This ♦ suit is miserable. With the points outside ♦'s, 2♦ is a very poor bid. Not as bad as double, but not far off.

1NT is the obvious overcall. This shows 15-18 points and guarantees stopper(s) in the suit bid. As with 1NT openers, a 1NT overcall does not guarantee a stopper in every suit, this ♠ holding is fine. The 1NT overcall stands out a mile. Unlike 1NT openers, 1NT overcalls may sometimes be a little unbalanced as long as they contain stopper(s) in the bid suit. Many people would even open this South hand with a strong NT.

At this juncture, Hans wandered over. Upon hearing that I had said to overcall 1NT he said that 2♦ is the correct bid and that you should not overcall 1NT with a weak doubleton. I'll be diplomatic for once – no further comment. Just read Marty Bergen.

Anyway, if you overcall 1NT then game is easily reached. Playing transfers it goes: (after the 1♥ opening) - 1NT - 2♥(xfer) - 2♠ - 3NT - pass. Easy.

After a 2♦ overcall it is not so easy. Should North bid 2♠? Is 2♠ forcing? Should North jump to 3♠? Or perhaps cue bid? Or pass? If North bids 2♠ and South bids 2NT is that forcing? How many points does it show? There are no clear-cut answers to most of these questions and they are partnership agreements. It's so much easier after a 1NT overcall isn't it? If you can bid your hand in one go, do so.

And what happened at the other tables? It was played 4 times and nobody bid game. Guess people need to read up on the 1NT overcall?

Bidding Quiz Solutions

Hand A: 2♥. Better than 1NT when playing 5 card majors

Hand B: 1NT. Semi-balanced with ♥ stop(s)

Hand C: Bid 2♣ (or 2♥). Do not pass.

Hand D: I prefer 2NT, but 1♦ is equally good. Not good enough for a strong 2♦.

Hand E: Pass. Not good enough for 2NT.

Hand F: Pass. With length in their suit and not enough for a 1NT overcall, do not dbl.

Hand G: 2♣ Stayman. It's best not to transfer when 5-4 (or 4-5) in the majors.

Hand H: Are you a man or a mouse? Bid 4♥. If you play Ogust then a pessimistic 2NT is acceptable. 3♥ is weak, not invitational.