

Last week's winners: Monday 29/3/04

Friday 2/4/04

1st Chuck/Hans 64%2nd Laine/Sirkkala 63%1st Jim/Tomas 66%2nd Hans/Jan 62%Monday 19th (so two weeks time) will be Songcran in Pattaya, the Bridge will be cancelled.**Bidding Quiz****Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.**

Hand A

Hand B

With Hand A partner opens 2♣ and RHO doubles, what do you bid?

♠ K10653

♠ AJ6543

♥ 96

♥ AK6

♦ 862

♦ QJ5

♣ 972

♣ 3

With hand B you open 1♠, LHO overcalls 2♥ and partner bids 2♠. The opponents compete to 4♥, what do you do?

Hand C

Hand D

With Hand C RHO deals and passes, what do you do?

♠ -

♠ K10876

♥ Q842

♥ KJ64

♦ AJ87543

♦ A109

♣ J6

♣ 3

Hand D has just 11 points, so do you open or pass in 1st seat?

Hand E

Hand F

With hand E you open 1♥ and partner responds 1♠, what is your rebid?

♠ K109

♠ QJ3

♥ AKQ972

♥ A1064

♦ 82

♦ AK8

♣ AQ

♣ J109

With Hand F you are playing a weak NT. So you open 1♥ or 1♣ or 1♦ (it does not really matter) and partner responds 1NT. What now?

A Nice SequenceBoard 23 from Monday 29th, both vul.

North

South

West

North

East

South

♠ KQ853

♠ A109

-

-

-

pass

♥ AQJ4

♥ K9875

1♦

dbl (1)

2♦

2♥ (2)

♦ 102

♦ 96

pass

4♥ (3)

all pass

♣ AJ

♣ 872

This is a nice sequence. With a strong hand and both majors, I prefer a double at (1) to a 1♠ overcall. 2♥ at (2) is a free bid and promises values (about 6-9, could be less with good shape). 4♥ at (3) is then clear. Now 3 pairs reached 4♥ on Monday but 3 did not. I don't know the bidding, but one pair stopped in 3♥, one in 3♠ and one was in an inferior 4♠. I can't see any sensible sequence that fails to find 4♥. Maybe somebody can enlighten me?

The Beginner's Page

Jacoby Transfers

When partner opens 1NT then he has said it all – a balanced hand in the 15-17 point range, with at least two cards in every suit.

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4	Hand 5
♠ 982	♠ J92	♠ K92	♠ K92	♠ K92
♥ Q10852	♥ AQ1052	♥ AQ1052	♥ AQ1052	♥ AQ1052
♦ J87	♦ J87	♦ J87	♦ A107	♦ A107
♣ Q9	♣ 95	♣ 95	♣ Q5	♣ A5

Consider these five hands after partner has opened 1NT (15-17). They all have a decent 5 card ♥ suit and either ♥'s or NT could possibly be the final contract with all five. But Hand 1 is weak, Hand 2 is invitational, Hand 3 is worth game, Hand 4 is slam invitational and Hand 5 is definitely worth slam. But how do we inform partner that we have a ♥ suit and then also tell partner about our strength?

With traditional natural methods you bid naturally. So 1♥, weak with hand 1. With Hands 3,4 and 5 you bid 3♥, forcing. Quite what you are meant to do with hand 2 is undefined. Just toss a coin? Of course it's totally unworkable, you cannot define weak, invitational and strong hands with just two bids (2♥ & 3♥); the solution was found by Oswald Jacoby. With all of these hands your first bid is 2♦, a transfer that says that you have 5 ♥'s (any strength) and requests partner to bid 2♥, regardless of his strength or ♥ holding. The same applies with a ♠ suit, when 2♥ is the transfer bid.

Once opener complies with our transfer request, we then show the strength of our hand. In all of these examples we have a 5 card ♥ suit. Our initial transfer promises at least 5 cards in the suit and so we *do not* repeat it. All of these hands are relatively balanced and so NT is the natural rebid.

How does the bidding progress with our 5 example hands?

Hand 1: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - pass. This hand is not strong enough to bid again. You need 8-9 points to invite and so the only options were to pass the original 1NT or to transfer and then pass.

Transferring usually works out best.

Hand 2: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 2NT. An invitational sequence. With a minimal hand, opener may either pass or bid 3♥. With a maximum he will bid either 3NT or 4♥.

Hand 3: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 3NT. This shows game values with 5 ♥'s. If opener has 4 ♥'s he will convert to 4♥; if opener has only 2 ♥'s he will pass 3NT; if opener has 3 ♥'s he usually elects to go for the 5-3 fit but may pass 3NT with good holdings in the other suits.

Hand 4: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 4NT. This is a slam invitation showing a 5 card ♥ suit.

Hand 5: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 4♣. As we use 4NT as a natural slam invitation this is Gerber, asking for aces on the way to slam. I will cover ace asking conventions (Blackwood and Gerber) in subsequent news-sheets.

Fine, but what does responder do if he has an unbalanced hand and so does not want to bid NT at his 2nd turn? Perhaps a 6 card suit, or a 2nd suit? We will cover this when we look at Jacoby transfers in more detail next week.

When they interfere with our big bidBoard 25 from Monday 29th, E-W vul.

Dealer: ♠ J87
 North ♥ 1043
 E-W vul ♦ J43
 ♣ J1086

♠ K10653 N ♠ A94
 ♥ 96 W E ♥ AQJ2
 ♦ 862 S ♦ A7
 ♣ 972 ♣ AKQ5
 ♠ Q2
 ♥ K875
 ♦ KQ1095
 ♣ 43

(1) weak, 12-14

Table A:

West (A)	North	East	South
-	pass	2♦ (1)	dbl
2♥ (2)	pass	4♥	all pass

Table B:

West	North	East	South
-	pass	2♣ (3)	dbl
pass (4)	pass	2NT (5)	pass
3♥ (6)	pass	4♥	all pass

Table C:

West	North	East	South
-	pass	2♣ (3)	pass
2♦ (7)	pass	2NT (8)	pass
3♥ (9)	pass	3♠ (10)	pass
3NT (11)	pass	4♠ (12)	all pass

There were a number of silly contracts on this deal from Monday, let's have a look at three of the tables: -

Table A: This pair were playing Benjamin two's (I think) and 2♦ at (1) was their big bid (23+). Now normally 2♥ at (2) is then the negative (or relay), but things change when the opponents interfere. There is no need to bid with a minimum and any bid (such as 2♥ here) is natural and shows a positive response.

Table B: This pair played Standard American, so 2♣ is the biggest bid. Quite why South doubled this bid I don't know, but West correctly passed at (4) showing a minimum. 2NT at (5) shows a balanced 22-24. This hand is probably a bit too good, but never mind. If your partner opens 2NT (either directly or via 2♣) then it's best to play Stayman and transfers. Thus West's 3♥ at (6) was a transfer, unfortunately East thought it was natural.

Table C: A reasonable auction to the top spot. 2♦ is negative or a relay, whatever you play it as (you pass if RHO interferes). 2NT at (8) is a balanced 22-24. 3♥ at (9) is a transfer and East simply accepts at (10). 3NT at (11) offers East the choice of games and East correctly elected to play in the 5-3 fit at (12).

And what happened? The board was played 6 times and only one pair found 4♠. One pair somehow reached a silly 6♠, but made it! Two pairs stopped in 2NT. I don't know the bidding, but West should always transfer and it's worth game opposite a 2♣ opener.

The bottom lines. It's best to play Stayman and transfers after partner has opened 2NT or has bid 2NT having opened 2♣ (or 2♦). If the opponents interfere with your partner's 2♣ bid, then pass unless you have something definite to say.

Let's have a summary of big balanced hand bidding playing Standard American: -

15-17	open 1NT
18-19	open 1 of a suit and then jump in NT
20-21	open 2NT
22-24	open 2♣ and rebid 2NT
25+	open 2♣ and rebid 3NT*

* I personally don't like this 3NT rebid as you then cannot then use Stayman and transfers below the level of 3NT (so I prefer to play Benjamin twos, then 2♦ and rebid 2NT is 25+). But, unfortunately, Benjamin twos have not yet made it across the pond. They are totally compatible with the rest of Standard American, but it's not caught on yet in U.S.A.

Bid game or double?

Table A:

Board 8 from Friday 2nd, love all.

		West	North	East (B)	South
Dealer:	♠ 102	pass	pass (1)	1♠	2♥
West	♥ 1092	2♠	3♥	3♠ (2)	pass
Love all	♦ K1073	pass	4♥ (3)	dbl (4)	all pass
	♣ AK64				

Table B:

			West	North	East	South
♠ KQ97	N	♠ AJ6543				
♥ 73	W E	♥ AK6				
♦ 62	S	♦ QJ5				
♣ J10752		♣ 3	pass	pass	1♠	2♥
	♠ 8		2♠	3♥	4♠	pass
	♥ QJ854		pass	pass		
	♦ A984					
	♣ Q98					

Table A: The North hand is 11 points but has excellent intermediates and all the points are in the long suits. A 1♣ opening is a reasonable alternative to pass. Anyway, it's all very sensible up to (2); with a 6 card suit, excellent shape, and controls in the enemy suit, I would bid 4♠ here. And what about this 4♥ bid at (3)? Silly – remember The Law, if you think that it's such a nice hand then why not open? Anyway, the initial pass was fine, you have supported partner and can be sure of only 8 combined trumps. The 4♥ bid is silly here because it violates the Law (insufficient trumps by two) and if the opponents bid 4♠ then that may make! Well then, did you bid 4♠ or double at (4) with hand B in this week's quiz? 4♠ is clear. It will probably make and you cannot count on any more than two tricks in defence.

Table B: A sensible auction all round.

And what happened? 4♥ was bid and doubled twice, it went one down. 4♠ was bid twice and made exactly on both occasions.

The bottom line. AK of the opponent's suit are good cards, whether you are declarer or defending.

Beware of favourable vulnerability?Board 5 from Friday 2nd, N-S vul.

Dealer:	♠ J43		West	North	East	South
North	♥ A63					
N-S vul	♦ 1042		-	1♣	pass	1♦ (1)
	♣ AK62		1♥	1NT (2)	2♥	2♠ (3)
			pass	3♠	pass	4♠
♠ 1096	N	♠ 872	pass	pass	5♥ (4)	pass
♥ KQJ42	W E	♥ 10985	pass	dbl	all pass	
♦ A9	S	♦ QJ3				
♣ 954		♣ QJ7				
	♠ AKQ5					
	♥ 7					
	♦ K8765					
	♣ 1083					

5♥ went minus 4 for a clear bottom. There was some discussion of the bidding after the hand, let's have a look: -

1♦ is best here, it is not denying a 4 card major and this hand is strong enough to bid ♠'s later. The 1NT bid at (2) is still 12-14, but it is usually upper range with a stop as you can pass with a weaker hand. The 2♠ bid at (3) is a reverse, but there was a debate about how many ♠'s (and ♦'s) the bid shows. North maintained that as he denied 4 ♠'s with his 1NT bid at (2) that South should have 5 ♠'s (and thus 6 ♦'s) for the bid. I don't see it that way and agree with South's bid, surely South is simply bidding out his shape and showing his strength? Consider the similar sequence 1♦ - 1NT - 2♠; this is a reverse, promising 5♦'s and 4♠'s; I don't see that the fact that the 1NT bidder opened the bidding with 1♣ here is relevant. And, I ask, what is South meant to bid at (3) if not 2♠?

Anyway, N-S reached a somewhat dubious 4♠ but then East rescued them at (4)! What was East thinking? He has 9 combined trumps, that is two below what's required for the 5 level in these situations. With some sort of ruffing value it might be OK, but with a totally flat hand and all the points in opponent's suits this hand is far more suited for defence. Also, listen to the bidding! It is by no means clear that the opponents are in a comfortable contract, it could (should?) easily be a 4-3 fit. And, what's more, you have an obvious lead (a ♥); North probably only has one ♥ stop (else he would elect for NT rather than a 4-3 fit) and the long trump hand is going to be forced. 4♠ is very likely to play badly even with the kind 3-3 ♠ split. And since partner probably has 3 losing ♠'s, 5♥ will be massacred.

What happened? 800 away, when ♠ contracts at other tables made only 8 or 9 tricks.

It's time to look at The Law in more detail. The full version says that the total number of tricks is equal to the total number of trumps. Let's look at it from East's standpoint. Here N-S probably have just 7 trumps (♠'s) and E-W have 9 ♥'s. That's a total of 16 tricks. In the unlikely event that 4♠ actually makes, then that's 10 tricks and so a 5♥ contract goes 5 down!

The bottom line. It is often a good idea to sacrifice at favourable vulnerability, but not with a flat hand that is ideal for defence! Quacks in opponents suit are reasonable cards if the opponents are declaring, they are virtually worthless if you side is declaring. Listen to the bidding. Don't sacrifice against contracts that are not going to make! Obey the Law.

An Easy game missed

Board 11 from Monday 29th, love all.

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ AQ108652	♠ K9	-	-	-	pass
♥ -	♥ K92	1♠	pass	1NT	pass
♦ A95	♦ Q108742	3♠ (1)	pass	4♠ (2)	all pass
♣ K92	♣ 106				

This was the bidding at two tables on Monday. The first two bids are pretty obvious and West's 3♠ at (1) is fine. With 8 points and the trump king, East should certainly go on to game at (2).

So why have I included such a simple hand? Three pairs failed to reach game. A 1♠ opener was passed out once (East cannot pass). Other contracts were 2♠ and 3♠, I don't know the bidding, but I don't see how 4♠ can be missed. 4♠ at (1) would not be unreasonable and even a 4♠ opening would be found by some. All avenues lead to 4♠?

A Soar Thumb

Board 22 from Monday 29th, E-W vul.

North	South (F)	<u>Table A</u>			
		West	North	East	South
♠ 952	♠ QJ3	-	-	pass	1NT
♥ Q32	♥ A1064	pass	pass	pass	
♦ Q10	♦ AK8				
♣ Q8765	♣ J109	<u>Table B</u>			
		West	North	East	South
		-	-	pass	1♥
		pass	1NT (1)	pass	2NT (2)
		pass	pass	pass	

Table A: This board was played 6 times, and 5 times the auction was as Table A. Very sensible; the South hand is totally flat but the excellent intermediates and honour combinations make it worth a 1NT opener.

Table B: So what happened at Table B? Playing Acol 1♥ is the correct opening and 1NT is correct at (1). Now this is where some Acoll bidders go astray; the South hand is 15 points and so is a 1NT rebid. If partner had responded 1♠ then 1NT would have been correct, and if partner had responded 2♣/♦ then 2NT would have been correct. But what after a 1NT response? The answer is that the 1NT response is 6-9 (often the lower range, as partner can respond 2♣/♦ with 8 or more points) and so the raise to 2NT at (2) shows 17-18 points; i.e. the same as a 2NT bid if partner had responded 1♠ instead of 1NT when playing Acoll.

And what happened? The 2NT contract by N-S stuck out like a sore thumb on the score sheet as it went 1 down and was the only +ve entry in the E-W column. 1NT either made exactly or +1 at other tables.

The bottom line. The sequence 1x – 1NT – 2NT shows 17-18 points. This is true whatever system you play.

Perfect Partners?

Board 6 from Friday 2nd, E-W vul.

West	East (D)	West	North	East	South
♠ A2	♠ K10876	-	-	pass	pass
♥ AQ1075	♥ KJ64	pass	pass		
♦ 764	♦ A109				
♣ J106	♣ 3				

4♥ was bid at two other tables, making and making +2 (!). After this ‘auction’ East was asked why he had not opened – he replied that he never opens with 11 points. And what about West? Again, a clear opener – especially in 3rd seat.

Let’s start with the East hand. It has two good suits, an ace, and a singleton – what more do you want? It has good intermediates and, very importantly, it is easy to bid . You open 1♠ and have an easy rebid of 2♥. I guess that pass is easier, but it’s not bridge in my book.

And the West hand? Not quite as nice but a sound opener, especially in 3rd seat. The 5 card suit is a good one, two aces are good, and even the jack is not too bad as it’s backed up by the 10.

Since both of these players think alike then they are obviously perfect for each other.

The bottom line. Be sensible and upgrade for long major suits, singletons, aces etc etc. If in doubt, see if there is an easy rebid (as with this East hand). 3rd seat may (should?) open light (but not 1NT).

Just as an aside; two (!) players have asked me about the wisdom of opening 1NT below strength in 3rd seat. It is *totally* unsound. Your 1NT opener in 3rd seat needs to be up-to-strength, and I will not even open a weak NT (playing Acol) in 3rd seat. Too dangerous.

A poor Pre-empt

Board 2 from Monday 29th, N-S vul.

North	South (C)	<u>Table A</u>			
		West	North	East	South
♠ Q1076	♠ -	-	-	pass	3♦
♥ AJ1093	♥ Q842	pass	pass (1)	pass	
♦ 9	♦ AJ87543				
♣ AQ10	♣ J6				

		<u>Table B</u>			
		West	North	East	South
		-	-	pass	3♦
		pass	3NT (1)	all pass	

No less than 4 South’s found the poor 3♦ opening and an easy 4♥ was missed. Generally speaking, you should not pre-empt when you hold a 4 card major. This South hand has far too much playing strength if there is a ♥ fit. South should pass. And what should North do at (1)? I would pass, but then I don’t expect partner to have playing strength in a major when he pre-empts.

And what happened? Two pairs played in 3♦ and two other pairs in an almost equally silly 3NT. The top scores for E-W were the pair who bid 4♥ (+1) and another pair who also bid to 4♥ and then doubled the 4♠ sacrifice.

The bottom lines. Do not pre-empt with a 4 card major, especially if partner is not a passed hand.

An Easy Game Missed

Board 13 from Monday 29th, both vul.

North (E) South

♠ K109 ♠ A8765
♥ AKQ972 ♥ 64
♦ 82 ♦ QJ5
♣ AQ ♣ 872

Table A

West	North	East	South
-	1♥ (1)	pass	pass (2)
pass			

Table B

West	North	East	South
-	1♥ (1)	pass	1♠ (2)
pass	3♥ (3)	pass	pass (4)
pass			

Table C

West	North	East	South
-	1♥ (1)	pass	1♠ (2)
pass	3♣	pass	3NT (5)
pass	pass (6)	pass	

3NT, 4♥ and 4♠ are all reasonable contracts, but game was missed 3 times on Monday: -

Table A: First of all, the opening bid. A nice hand, but you have to open 1♥ unless you play strong twos (or Benjamin). Obviously passing at (2) is very silly.

Table B: So we've got past the first hurdle (partner did not pass our 1♥ opening), but what now? A jump to 3♥ was the choice at three tables; unfortunately this is not forcing and it was passed twice. I would not pass at (4), but two players decided to.

Table C: This West found the solution. The West hand is a very good one and partner's ♠ bid improves it. I agree with Jim here that 3♥ is not forcing and so not a good bid. It does not matter that the ♣ suit is not real because you have support for partner's ♠'s and it is a stop if the final contract turns out to be NT. 3♣ is game forcing. 3NT at (5) worked out well but I would bid 3♠ to show the 5 card suit; also 4♥ at (6) is a sound alternative.

The bottom line. If the auction develops in such a way that you think game is on, then don't make an invitational bid.

Bidding Quiz Answers

Hand A: Pass. When the opponents interfere then you need not bid. Pass thus means the same as 2♦ if there was no intervention.

Hand B: Bid 4♠.

Hand C: Pass. Do not pre-empt with a 4 card major, especially if partner has not passed.

Hand D: 1♠. A clear opener in any seat.

Hand E: 3♣. It's tricky! This is the type of hand where you really want to be playing strong twos (or Benjamin twos). 3♥ would be the choice of many, but it's not forcing. Partner's 1♠ response has improved the hand (♠ K109 are excellent cards) and so I prefer a forcing bid. 3♣ is probably best as it's not unilateral - 3NT, 4♥ or 4♠ could turn out to be the best final contract. 4♥ is also a reasonable bid, but I prefer 3♣.

Hand F: Pass. It does not matter what system you play, 2NT here promises 17-18 points.