

Monday 13/12/04		N-S winners		E-W winners	
		1 st	Bob/Dave	60 %	1 st John/Willy 61 %
		2 nd =	Beryl/Margit	54 %	2 nd Alex/Jeff 56 %
		2 nd =	Hans(AU)/Norman	54 %	

Wednesday 15/12/04 1st Chuck/Lewis 60 % 2nd Norman/Kees 57 %

Friday 17/12/04 1st Norman/Ian 60 % 2nd Bob/Dave 58 %

Norman deserves a mention; he's just back and finished in the top two at all three clubs with three different partners. And didn't John/Willy do well, they play just once a week.

Bidding Quiz

Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.

Hand A Hand B With Hand A partner opens 1♠ and RHO doubles, what do you bid?

♠ 942 ♠ J
 ♥ K54 ♥ AQ987643
 ♦ K653 ♦ Q6
 ♣ KJ6 ♣ Q3

Hand C Hand D With Hand C LHO opens 1NT and partner passes. What do You do if ... (a) RHO bids 2♣ Stayman?
 (b) RHO bids 2♦, a transfer?

♠ AK87 ♠ AQJ86
 ♥ A87 ♥ AKQ74
 ♦ 7 ♦ A6
 ♣ KJ842 ♣ 2

Hand E Hand F With Hand E LHO opens 1♠, partner doubles and RHO bids 3♠. What do you bid?

♠ KQJ75 ♠ K854
 ♥ 107 ♥ Q983
 ♦ J72 ♦ A7
 ♣ 1084 ♣ A84

Hand G Hand H With Hand G partner opens 1♠ and RHO overcalls 2♥ . You play negative doubles, so what do you do?

♠ J8 ♠ AQJ108752
 ♥ A10543 ♥ 765
 ♦ AQ95 ♦ -
 ♣ 108 ♣ 3

Hand J Hand K With Hand J partner opens 1♣, what do you do?

♠ 10953 ♠ A842
 ♥ 976 ♥ J3
 ♦ A8653 ♦ K102
 ♣ 7 ♣ A982

With Hand K LHO opens 1♣ and this is passed round to you, what do you do?

Passing Partner's take-out double

Board 13 from Monday 13th

Dealer: ♠ KQJ75

North ♥ 107

Both vul ♦ J72

♣ 1084

Table A

West (A)	North	East	South
----------	-------	------	-------

-	pass	1♠	dbl
---	------	----	-----

pass (1)	pass (2)	pass	
----------	----------	------	--

♠ 942

N ♠ A10863

♥ K54

W E ♥ J962

♦ K653

S ♦ A8

♣ KJ6

♣ A3

Table B

West	North(E)	East	South
------	----------	------	-------

-	pass	1♠	dbl
---	------	----	-----

3♠ (1)	pass (3)	pass	pass
--------	----------	------	------

♠ -

♥ AQ83

♦ Q1094

♣ Q9752

Table A: (1) So what did you bid with this West Hand A in this week's quiz? I think that pass is feeble – you cannot pass with 9 points (deduct one for the flat shape). Redouble (9+ points) is reasonable, but I would prefer to have less ♠'s for that bid. I would bid 1NT but 2♠ is also acceptable.

(2) Passing 1♠ doubled here is risky and 1NT is a sound alternative.

Table B: (1) As I said, I like either 1NT or 2♠ here. There are a number major faults with this 3♠ bid. Does South's double affect your bid? More experienced players play the Truscott convention here, whereby 3♠ is simply pre-emptive and a sound raise to 3♠ or better is shown by bidding 2NT (you do not need a natural 2NT bid as with a balanced 11-12 you would redouble) but this hand is unsuitable in any case as it contains only 3 trumps. Anyway, this E-W pair obviously did not play that and so bid ignoring the double. If there was no double then 3♠ is wrong for two reasons. First, it should promise 4 card support (else bid a minor first) and secondly this hand is simply not worth an invitational raise (totally flat, only 3 trumps and no ♠ honour). 1NT or 2♠ are correct.

(3) And what did you bid with the North Hand E in this week's quiz? You would presumably like to double for penalties but you cannot – double would be for take-out and you know that partner, with his ♠ void, will almost certainly bid. There is no option but to pass and collect the undoubled penalty. On a good day East may bid 4♠ which you can double for penalties or partner may double 3♠ (again for take-out) and you can pass this.

And what happened? 1♠ doubled made for a E-W top. 3♠ was down two and the 200 for N-S was a near top.

The bottom lines.

- You need very good trumps to pass partner's one level take-out double. ♠KQJxx may not be good enough.
- If partner makes a take-out double and RHO raises, then a double by you is generally again for take-out.
- Deduct a point for the totally flat 4333 type shape.

The Truscott 2NT

Board 23 from Wednesday 15th

I mentioned it in the last deal, so here it is in action – at least by one player of the pair.

Dealer: ♠ K854
 South ♥ Q983
 Both vul ♦ A7
 ♣ A84

♠ Q106 N ♠ 973
 ♥ A2 W E ♥ J4
 ♦ Q1053 S ♦ J984
 ♣ KJ95 ♣ 10762
 ♠ AJ2
 ♥ K10765
 ♦ K62
 ♣ Q3

Table A

West	North (F)	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
dbl	(1)	2NT (2)	pass
pass			

Table B

West	North (F)	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
dbl	(1)	redbl (4)	pass (5)
1NT	(6)	dbl (7)	pass (8)
pass (9)			

Table A: (1) I like to have 4 ♠'s for a double of 1♥ but this double is acceptable.

(2) What did you bid with this North Hand F in this week's quiz? After a double a redouble promises 9+ points and is generally looking to double the opponents somewhere since you have the balance of the power. However, when you have a fit for partner there is less chance of a juicy penalty and it's best to support. Most experienced players play that a raise to 2♥, 3♥ or even 4♥ here are weak pre-emptive bids. So what do you do with a sound raise to 3♥ or 4♥? The answer is that a natural bid of 2NT (normally a flat 11-12) is no longer needed as with that hand type you would redouble. So 2NT is a conventional bid, proclaiming a sound raise in ♥'s and in this instance North would bid 4♥ next turn.
 (3) Of course the Truscott 2NT is forcing and with this minimum South should bid 3♥ (which this North would have raised to 4♥). This South has agreed to play the Truscott 2NT convention in future.

Table B: (4) This pair presumably do not play Truscott 2NT and so North redoubled.

(5) With no 5 card suit East correctly passed.

(6) I believe that East criticised this bid. I think that it's fine as long as you agree that it conveys the message 'pick a minor'.

(7) This North hand is not suitable to double a minor, that's why I would not have bid redouble at (4), but it is happy to double 1NT

(8) East could pick a minor here but pass is OK as partner gets another shot.

(9) But West cannot pass here. He either has to bid a minor or redouble to insist that partner bids one. You can be sure that 1NT doubled will be a disaster.

And what happened? 2NT by North made 11 tricks but scored a clear N-S bottom. 1NT by West went 4 down for the E-W bottom. All the other tables were in a simple 4♥ by N-S making.

The Bottom lines: -

- A redouble is 9+ points but generally with no fit for partner.
- Support with support rather than redouble. Bid Truscott 2NT with support and 11+ points.
- If your side is on the receiving end of the doubles, do not play in NT, play in a 4-4 fit.
- In many situations, a redouble by a NT bidder is SOS.

Bid their suit to ask for a stopBoard 14 from Monday 13th

Dealer:	♠ 4				
East	♥ K74	West	North	East	South
Love all	♦ K10	-	pass	pass	1♦
	♣ AQJ9862	pass	2♣	dble (1)	pass (2)
		2♠	3♠ (3)	pass	3NT (4)
♠ K973	N	♠ AQ85	all pass		
♥ A53	W E	♥ J1062			
♦ 953	S	♦ J876			
♣ 743		♣ 10			
		♠ J1062			
		♥ Q98			
		♦ AQ42			
		♣ K5			

- (1) A rather light double; but with both majors, acceptable when non-vul.
- (2) With a minimum hand pass is better than 1NT.
- (3) What would you bid here? Obviously you (well at least I) want to be in 3NT if, and only if, partner has a ♠ stop; and the way to find out is to cue bid their suit.
- (4) With a stop, South bids 3NT. With no stop he would bid something else and North would then settle for 5♣.

And what happened? 3NT is clearly the best spot. It was bid at most tables and made anything from 9 to 12 tricks. There were of course the odd couple of pairs who do not believe what I say about 3NT usually being better than being in a minor. 5♦ somehow went minus 3 for the deserved bottom and 3♣ scored two overtricks for the 2nd bottom.

The bottom line. If you need a stop from partner in the enemy's suit to be in 3NT, then cue bid their suit.

A 4 level opener

Board 18 from Monday 13th

Dealer: ♠ 52
 East ♥ K2
 N-S vul ♦ A109854
 ♣ K76

Table A
 West North East(B) South
 - - 3♥ (1) 3♠ (2)
 all pass

♠ Q10986 N ♠ J ♠ AK743
 ♥ J105 W E ♥ AQ987643
 ♦ K2 S ♦ Q6 -
 ♣ J108 ♣ Q3 all pass
 ♠ -
 ♥ -
 ♦ J73
 ♣ A9542

Table B
 West North East(B) South
 - - 4♥ (1) 4♠ (3)

Table A: (1) What did you open with Hand B in this week's quiz? Generally speaking, with six it's two, with seven it's three and with eight (a major) it's four. 4♥ is the best opening with this hand, especially non-vul.
 (2) Surely 3♠ is the best bet.

Table B: (1) This East chose 4♥.
 (3) And that makes it difficult for South.

And what happened? 4♠ went minus 3 but scored only just below average as it was doubled at other tables.

The bottom line. With an 8 card major and a weakish hand, open at the 4 level. With a stronger hand play Namyats (open 4♣/♦ - news-sheet 106).

Don't double with no surprise

Board 15 from Monday 13th

Dealer: ♠ 3
 South ♥ Q9542
 N-S vul ♦ AQJ65
 ♣ 95

♠ 10652 N ♠ AK87
 ♥ 1063 W E ♥ A87
 ♦ 9432 S ♦ 7
 ♣ 107 ♣ KJ842
 ♠ QJ94
 ♥ KJ
 ♦ K108
 ♣ AQ63

Table A

West	North	East(C)	South
-	-	-	1NT
pass	2♦	pass (1)	2♥
pass	3♦ (2)	pass	3NT

Table B

West	North	East(C)	South
-	-	-	1NT
pass	2♦	3♣ (1)	3NT (3)
all pass			

Table C

West	North	East(C)	South
-	-	-	1NT
pass	2♦	dbl (1)	2♥ (4)
pass	3♦ (5)	pass	3NT
pass	pass	dbl (6)	pass
pass	redbl (7)	all pass	

Table A: (1) So what did you bid with this East Hand C(b) in this week's quiz? You know that LHO is 15-17 but don't yet know about RHO's strength. As 2♦ is forcing I think that a prudent pass is best and wait to see if North has points – you can always bid next go if North is weak.

(2) A 2nd suit and game forcing.

Table B: (1) This East chose to overcall his 5 card suit, I guess it's not too bad at this vulnerability?
 (3) Obviously this worked out OK but I would never dream of bidding here, partner has not promised any points with his transfer. I would pass and then the auction would be much the same as Table A.

Table C: (1) Apparently East meant this double as take-out. That is not standard and makes no sense to me. The standard meaning of a double of a cipher bid is that it shows that suit and you want it led if partner is on opening lead.
 (4) I would pass here. I play that to complete the transfer after a double promises three of the suit (pass with two and super-accept with four).
 (5) 2nd suit, game forcing.
 (6) I've been through this before. N-S have freely bid to game and East has nothing more than three top tricks. With no surprise, double is a poor bid.
 (7) North has shown his hand nicely, partner obviously has the black suits and there is no reason to believe that 3NT should not make easily, teach 'em a lesson.

And what happened? A ♠ was led at Table C (presumably West also played that the double did not show ♦'s?). Anyway, East had no more than his 3 top tricks and so that was 1400 to N-S. Most other pairs were in 3NT undoubled.

The bottom line. Don't double a freely bid game without a surprise.

Is a reverse forcing?

Board 16 from Monday 13th

Dealer: ♠ Q3
 West ♥ 9653
 E-W vul ♦ Q863

West	North(me)	East	South
1♣	pass	1♠	pass (2)

<p>♣ J87</p> <p>♠ J7 N ♠ K9842</p> <p>♥ A2 W E ♥ 1074</p> <p>♦ AK95 S ♦ J1072</p> <p>♣ KQ643 ♣ 2</p> <p> ♠ A1065</p> <p> ♥ KQJ8</p> <p> ♦ 4</p> <p> ♣ A1095</p>	<p>2♦ (3) pass pass (4) dbl (5)</p> <p>pass 2♥ (6) 3♦ (7) all pass</p>
---	---

Now one nameless absent individual has accused me of always being negative in the news-sheets. Hans (Austria) and myself were pitted against the Australians here and I like the bidding all round, let's have a look: -

- (1) Would you respond with this East Hand? You know me, I would never pass 1♣ with a singleton and a hand like this – and it appears that our Australian pair (Gerard/Derek) have the same philosophy (they were E-W here).
- (2) This is a nice hand but there is no good bid as the opponents have bid two of your suits.
- (3) A reverse, so about 16 + points.
- (4) It looks like I am not the only person who believes that a reverse need not be forcing. 2♦ is surely a better spot than passing out 1♣! My personal opinion is that it's OK to pass a reverse if you have responded on sub-minimal values, and this is especially true if you play strong (or Benjamin) twos (when opener will not have a rock-crusher).
- (5) There's only 1 suit left so South could simply bid 2♥, but it may just be that partner can pass for penalties...
- (6) ... but this North hand is not good enough to pass and with 4 ♥'s a 2♥ bid is clear.
- (7) And this is a reasonable bid. East has shown his sub-minimum and so it's safe(ish) to retreat into the known 4-4 ♦ fit, it's probably a better bid if non-vul.

And what happened? 3♦ went two down for an about average score all round.

The bottom lines: -

- It's up to you if you play a reverse after a one level response as forcing or not. In Standard American it is forcing but it makes a lot of sense to me if it is not. That enables one to respond on sub-minimal values. In this example 1♣ passed out would be a poor result for E-W.

A Warning

And just one further point, you may recall in news-sheet 110 that Jeff psyched a 2♦ bid in this same sequence, 1♣ - 1♠ - 2♦ - pass, and then tried to blame partner for his pass, stating that 2♦ is forcing. Obviously not everybody plays a reverse as forcing and Jeff got the bottom he deserved - plus a warning that he will receive a suspension from the club if he psyches yet again.

5-5. bid the higher ranking

Board 12 from Wednesday 15th

A couple of people have tried to mis-quote me recently, let's make it very clear. With touching 4 card suits, bid the lower ranking; with touching 5 card suits, bid the higher ranking first. Let's see what can happen if you ignore this advice: -

Dealer:	♠ 1052
West	♥ J1063
N-S vul	♦ Q103
	♣ A109
♠ AQJ86	N ♠ K74
♥ AKQ74	W E ♥ 8
♦ A6	S ♦ K7542
♣ 2	♣ Q874
	♠ 93
	♥ 952
	♦ J98
	♣ KJ653

Table A

West (D)	North	East	South
1♠ (1) pass	2♦ (2) pass		
3♥ (3) pass	4♣ (4) pass		
pass (5) pass			

Table B

West	North	East	South
1♥ (1) pass	1NT	pass	
3♠ (6) pass	3NT (7) pass		
pass (8) pass			

Table A: (1) What did you open with this West Hand D in this week's quiz? I would not argue if you chose 2♣. If you decide to open a suit, then it's 1♠ - the higher ranking of 5-5's.

(2) It's not quite strong enough for a 4♥ splinter and with just 3 trumps I prefer to bid a minor before supporting ♠'s.

(3) Natural and game forcing.

(4) A singleton is not usually good in partner's 2nd suit and so East settled for game.

(5) West could press on here and I believe that he did at two other tables.

Table B: (1) This is the wrong opening bid as partner will always assume that you have more ♥'s than ♠'s.

(6) And here you see the problem. Some players play that a reverse after a 1NT response is not strictly forcing and since West was not sure he made a forcing 3♠ bid.

(7) But now the level is uncomfortably high and West has only promised 4 ♠'s and so East chose the NT game.

(8) And West has fixed himself. He cannot bid 4♥ now as that would promise 4-6 shape. Compare this with a possible auction 1♠ - 1NT - 3♥ - 3NT - 4♥. Here West shows 5-5, that is why you bid 5-5 from the top down.

And what happened? 3NT was bid at two tables and went one down for a joint bottom. 6♠ is obviously cold (lead a low ♥ to the 2nd round of ♥'s before pulling trumps and ruff in dummy). 6♠ was bid twice, one made it and one went one down. The last table was 4♠ just making. Funny game bridge, this last pair made 2 less tricks than are on offer but still got an above average score.

The bottom line. Bid 5-5 from the top and 4-4 from the bottom.

Pass 1♣?

Board 7 from Friday 17th

Dealer:	♠ KJ6	West(K)	North	East	South (J)
South	♥ KQ52	-	-	-	pass
Both vul	♦ J4	pass (1)	1♣	pass	pass (2)
	♣ KJ54	dbl (3)	1♥ (4)	all pass	
♠ A842	N	♠ Q7			
♥ J3	W E	♥ A1084			
♦ K102	S	♦ Q97			
♣ A982		♣ Q1063			
	♠ 10953				
	♥ 976				
	♦ A8653				
	♣ 7				

- (1) Many would open this hand. It conforms with the rule of 20 and a 1♣ opening leaves an easy 1♠ rebid.
- (2) Did you pass with this South Hand J in this week's quiz? You know me, I will not pass a possible 3 card 1♣ opening if there is a reasonable alternative. I would bid 1♦ and pass any rebid from partner.
- (3) And what did you bid with this West Hand K in this week's quiz? I would pass, partner (East) could not find a bid over 1♣ and so is probably flattish and this West hand has 4 trumps. More often than not a bid in this situation allows declarer to find a better spot.
- (4) And so he did.

And what happened? The Moysian ♥ fit played very well and N-S made 1♥ +1 for a clear top, obviously 1♣ by North would have been a very poor contract. At another table E-W made 2♥(!), I guess you have to play well if you bid that poorly? Other tables were in 1NT by various players.

The bottom lines: -

- Do not pass partner's 1♣ opening with shortage if you can 'dig up' a bid.
- Be wary of balancing over 1♣ if you have 4 ♣'s.
- Moysian fits play well when you can ruff in the 3 trump hand.

Play quiz

♠ AQJ108752	N	♠ K9
♥ 765	W E	♥ AJ93
♦ -	S	♦ A76
♣ 3		♣ QJ109

You are East and end up in 6♠ after some somewhat optimistic bidding by partner. Luckily you get a ♦ lead and can discard the ♣3. How do you continue? Answer overleaf.

This deal was brought to my attention, with one player saying how well they bid and how partner made it; let's see: -

Dealer: ♠ 63
 East ♥ KQ102
 Love all ♦ KQ52
 ♣ AK8

♠ AQJ108752 N ♠ K9
 ♥ 765 W E ♥ AJ93
 ♦ - S ♦ A76
 ♣ 3 ♣ QJ109

♠ -
 ♥ 84
 ♦ J109843
 ♣ 76542

Table A

West(H)	North	East	South
-	-	1NT	pass
4♣ (1)	pass (2)	4♠ (3)	pass
6♠ (4)	all pass		

Table B

West	North	East	South
-	-	1NT	pass
4♠ (1)	all pass		

Table A: (1) Gerber (ace-ask). So what did you bid with this West Hand H in this week's quiz? The direct bid of 4♣ over 1NT is rarely a good bid, and this is no exception; I would go as far as to say it is a very poor bid for a number of reasons.

To start with, should this West hand be looking for slam? Doubtful – but let's assume that you think it should, then how should you proceed? If you bid 4♣ asking for aces and you get, say, a response of two, does that include the 'useless' ♦A or not?

This North asked for aces and explained to me later that his partner's two ace response meant that it was 66% that partner had the correct aces. Wrong, of course, it's 33%. But is there a better way to bid this West hand?

Yes. There are a couple of options.

First of all, if looking for slam then transfer. At least then a subsequent ace-ask would include the ♠K (RKCB). But actually there are better approaches. A transfer followed by 4♦ is played as a splinter by many – a reasonable approach. Even better is a transfer followed by 5♦ – showing a void. And, what's more, many pairs even have an improvement on this – 5♦ shows a void and is Exclusion RKCB – asking for keycards outside the ♦ suit – clearly a vast improvement on the direct 4♣ bid as the ♠K is included and the ♦ suit excluded.

- (2) And yet another reason why 4♣ should be bad – North should double this for a lead.
- (3) Anyway, in this auction East showed any two aces and (4) West punted slam.

Table B: This auction is probably more sensible, although there was an unsubstantiated rumour that West bid 4♠ believing that he was opening the bidding, having not seen partner's 1NT opening.

Actually, assuming that West did notice that East had opened, there are better ways to reach the same 4♠ contract. You can transfer and then bid 4♠ or else play Texas Transfers (or even South African Texas) whereby you transfer to 4♠ immediately. I would choose one of these options and not look for slam.

Anyway, the play in 6♠ was also brought to my attention, let's have a look: -

So then, you are in 6♠, how does the play go? Obviously it is a very poor contract but luckily for you East is declarer (a transfer would have ensured that but the fortunate two-ace reply also achieved the same result!). So with South on lead you get a stroke of luck with a ♦ lead because North did not double ♣'s. You toss dummy's losing ♣ on the ♦A but how do get rid of one of a losing ♥? What this East did was ruff a ♣, return to hand with the ♠9, ruff a ♣, return to hand with the ♠K, ruff a 3rd ♣ (the ♣A and ♣K have now fallen and trumps have been drawn), return to hand with the ♥A and toss a losing ♥ on the now established ♣Q.

Well played? His partner thought so and it worked – I was not so impressed. Did you come up with a superior line in the play quiz?

Play Quiz Answer

Playing for the ♣AK to drop in three rounds with 8 out is well below the odds. A 5-3 split is 47% and the odds of the AK being in the hand with 3 cards (or AK doubleton) are about 20%; the total chance of success for this line is about 10%. The correct line is to play the ♣Q at trick two and if not covered then toss a ♥. You regain the lead in hand and should then lead the ♣J and again toss a ♥ if not covered. This is a (double) ruffing finesse and will succeed 75% of the time – whenever South holds either the ♣A or ♣K or both. Unfortunately this was one of the 25% cases where ‘my’ 75% line would fail and the 10% line succeeds. So much for mathematics.

Of course it’s a very poor slam anyway with an ‘unavoidable’ ♥ loser on a ♣ lead. Even a trump lead ruins the entries.

And what happened elsewhere? 6♠ was also bid at another table, quite how it was made when West was declarer is a mystery; presumably North tried the ♣K after cashing the ♣A? – obviously a silly try as West would not bid slam with two losing ♣’s, would he? Note that in a situation like this when partner leads the A of a suit and the Q is on table, it is best for South to give count rather than attitude (which is meaningless in this slam contract). Some players lead ace for attitude and king for count, so North would have led the king to ask for count in the ♣ suit.

At another table North could not resist doubling 4♠ and so got a poor score when it made +1. Other tables were in 4♠ making either +1 or +2.

The bottom lines – top of next page.

The bottom lines: -

- With a long major opposite a 1NT opening, transfer.
- 4♣ (Gerber) directly over partner's 1NT opening is usually a very poor bid. More often than not it's better to transfer or bid Stayman or another forcing bid.
- With a long major and a hand with no slam ambitions opposite partner's 1NT opening you can transfer to 4♥ or 4♠ directly (Texas Transfers or South African Texas).
- Indeed, a direct 4♣ (Gerber) is rarely a good bid, and so this is scrapped when using South African Texas - 4♣ is a transfer to 4♥ and 4♦ is a transfer to 4♠.
- When a trump suit has been agreed or implied, many top players use a jump to five of an unbid suit as exclusion (Roman Keycard) Blackwood; whereby the ace of the exclusion suit is ignored in any reply.
- In situations where you obviously cannot give positive attitude, then give count.
- Play with the odds, a ruffing finesse is 50%, a double ruffing finesse is 75%.
- Do not bid Blackwood/Gerber with a void.
- Do not bid Blackwood/Gerber with a weak doubleton/triplet.
- Do not bid Blackwood/Gerber with both of the above!
- Do not tell me about it if you have!!

Don't pre-empt and then bid again

Board 8 from Friday 17th

How many times do I say the same thing over and over again in the news-sheets? And the culprit here most certainly reads them – shame it's in one ear (eye) and out the other.

Dealer:	♠ AKQ985	West	North	East	South
West	♥ AK953	4♦	(1)	4♠	(2)
Love all	♦ 9	4♦	(1)	4♠	(2)
	♣ 8	5♦	(3)	5♥	(4)

pass pass
all pass

♠ 4	N	♠ J652
♥ 4	W E	♥ 1072
♦ AQJ106532	S	♦ 87
♣ A73		♣ QJ54
		♠ 107
		♥ QJ86
		♦ K4
		♣ K10962

- (1) What would you open with this West Hand ? It's a matter of style but 5♦ is probably best. I would not argue with 4♦ (if you don't play Namyats), 1♦ or even a strong 2♦ . It's too strong for a 3♦ opening.
- (2) The pre-empt has made it difficult for North. He did not wish to double in case partner passed and so had little choice but 4♠ .
- (3) This 5♦ bid is ridiculous, especially with me leaning over your shoulder. If you think it's worth 5♦ (I won't argue) then bid it first go. This 2nd bid after pre-empting allows N-S to find the best contract.
- (4) And that they did.

And what happened? 5♥ made exactly (as would 4♠ , so 5♥ scores more). Some West's did not pre-empt and so N-S played in just 4♥ at three tables.

The bottom lines: -

- Pre-empt to the limit first go.
- Do not bid again having pre-empted.

Quickie Quiz

Hand L

♠ AQ653	You play negative doubles. Partner and RHO both pass and you open 1♠
♥ J8	in third seat. LHO overcalls 2♥ and partner and RHO both pass.
♦ J1064	What do you do?
♣ A6	Answer overleaf

How to penalise the opponents when playing negative doubles

Board 13 from Friday 17th

Dealer:	♠ J8				
North	♥ A10543	West	North (G)	East	South
Both vul	♦ AQ95	-	pass (1)	pass	1♠
	♣ 108	2♥ (2)	dbl (3)	pass	3♦ (4)

♠ 102	N	♠ K974
♥ KQ972	W E	♥ 6
♦ 32	S	♦ K87
♣ KJ32		♣ Q9754
		♠ AQ653
		♥ J8
		♦ J1064
		♣ A6

- (1) With the points in two suits, two tens and good intermediates, I would open this North hand with 1♥, especially as there's an easy 2♦ rebid. But it's a marginal opener and passing should have worked out very well.
- (2) This is a bit light for a two level overcall, especially vulnerable. But I guess it's OK if the opponents do not know how to double you for penalties?
- (3) And what did you do with this North Hand G in this week's quiz? If you play negative doubles you have to pass and await partner's re-opening double.
- (4) South obviously bids 3♦ here as partner's 'negative double' promised ♣'s and ♦'s.

And what happened? 3♦ made but did not score as much as 2♥ doubled going five or six down would have!

The bottom lines: -

- If you play negative doubles then pass when you have a penalty double hand
- if you play negative doubles then re-open with a double when partner passes an overcall from LHO.
- You need close to an opening hand to overcall at the two level, especially if vulnerable and if it's only a 5 card suit.

Quickie Quiz Answer

North should pass at (3) above and so the answer to the quickie quiz is that South should then double. When you play negative doubles then opener should always re-open with a double in situations like this in case partner has a penalty hand. The only exceptions are where opener has strength in the overcalled suit (so partner cannot possibly have a penalty hand) or when opener has a wildly distributional hand and cannot stand a double. The fact that partner is a passed hand is totally irrelevant.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: 2♠ or 1NT. I prefer 1NT with all the honours (tenaces) outside ♠'s. Of course the hand is not worth 3♠ (or 2NT) because it is totally flat, has only 3 card support for partner and has no honour in his suit.
- Hand B: 4♥. I would open 4♥ with this hand at any vulnerability.
- Hand C: (a) Double. This shows ♣'s and asks for a ♣ lead in the likely event that you end up defending.
(b) Pass. A double would show ♦'s and any other action is unwise.
- Hand D: 1♠ or 2♣. I think that it's worth 2♣, but only if partner understands that a 2♣ opening followed by a 2♠ bid may be the start of a big two-suiter and does not leap off to 4♠ (fast arrival) with a weak hand with miserable ♠'s (as one Windy City ex-club 'expert' advocates – he partnered Dave recently and that's apparently what he did). If you choose to open one of a suit, then it's 1♠ rather than 1♥ – bid 5-5's from the top down.
- Hand E: Pass. You would presumably like to double for penalties but you cannot as double here would be for take-out and you know that partner has a void.
- Hand F: You have a sound raise to 4♥ and that is the best bid if you play that as a sound raise. However, most players play 4♥ as weak. You could redouble (showing 9+ points) but that generally implies no fit for partner and a desire to defend a doubled contract. Both 3♥ and 4♥ bids are played as weak by most experienced pairs these days as is a new suit at the two level. So what is the answer?
2NT. The Truscott 2NT convention. 2NT is not needed to show a balanced 11-12 points (you would redouble) and so 2NT is conventional, showing a sound raise to 3♥ or more; this then frees the direct 3♥ and 4♥ bids for pre-empts.
- Hand G: Pass. You want to double the opponents for penalties, so pass and await partner's 'automatic' re-opening double. If partner does not re-open with a double most of the time, then do not play negative doubles or find a new partner.
- Hand H: 4♠. Preferably via a Texas (or South African Texas) bid or via a transfer. There may be slam, but partner needs the right cards and you need sophisticated methods to find if he has them.
- Hand J: 1♦. I am not sadistic enough to leave partner playing in 1♣ opposite a singleton.
- Hand K: Pass. Partner has some values but could do nothing over a 1♣ opening and so must be balanced or have ♣'s. You have 4 ♣'s and opener may well not be in his best spot.