

Last week's winners: Monday 12/1/04

Friday 16/1/04

N-S 1st Alex/Jeff 57 %
N-S 2nd Age/Villy 56 %E-W 1st Arne/Larse 71 %
E-W 2ⁿ Odd/Bjarne 63 %1st Paul/Joe 70%
2nd Chuck/Hans 58%

Just as well that Alex/Jeff are back in harness, it seems that they were the only home team pair to stop a complete Viking rout on Monday..

The Piltdown Men?

As is obvious to most members, our club has a very mixed standard. There are a few good players, but the vast majority are beginners or not-too-experienced. I was chatting to Kees and he asked if I could do anything about the antics of the 'cavemen' at the table next to him on Monday. Perhaps these 'superior players' should just try playing cards for enjoyment instead of continually being rude to each other and repeatedly calling the director? More of this later.

It is noticeable that we have a large number of visiting Norwegians who are undoubtedly excellent players (they certainly seem to stomp all over the home 'experts' every Monday), yet none of these seem to have to repeatedly call me over. *More than 50%* of director calls are made from the table of *one* specific individual. Silly? More of this later

Bidding Quiz

Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.

Hand A Hand B With Hand A you open 1♠ and partner bids 2♥.
What do you bid?

♠ KQJ86 ♠ 54
♥ QJ10 ♥ 9653 With Hand B LHO opens 1♦ and partner doubles.
♦ AKJ ♦ AQ974 What do you bid?
♣ 104 ♣ 53

Hand C Hand D What do you open with hand C?

♠ Q109753 ♠ -
♥ KQ43 ♥ AKQ73
♦ 2 ♦ A42 What do you open with hand D?
♣ A5 ♣ AKJ52

Hand E Hand F What do you open with hand E?

♠ 103 ♠ 2
♥ AKJ2 ♥ A
♦ KJ2 ♦ AK98764 With Hand F partner opens 2♠, what is your reply?
♣ AK76 ♣ J1062

Hand G Hand H With Hand G partner opens 2NT (perhaps via 2♣/♦ - it makes no difference). Anyway, he has a balanced hand with about 22 points. What do you bid?

♠ Q1043 ♠ AKJ2
♥ J1072 ♥ K872
♦ A4 ♦ 6
♣ 1052 ♣ KJ109 With Hand H LHO opens 1♦, what do you do?

Just doin' my 'job'?

A few minor problems last Monday. 9 tables with me playing – with one table outside. Most people realise that I am fairly busy in this scenario but this did not stop Alex/Jeff battling it out with Hans/Chuck and repeatedly calling me over to settle their silly disputes.

I was far too busy to know exactly what was going on, but this is the gist of it: -

Jeff refused to answer a ‘what if’ question posed by Chuck. Alex asked what Chuck’s 1♦ opening was. Hans said that it showed 4+ cards. Chuck corrected Hans’ incorrect explanation at an inappropriate time. Chuck thought that Alex’s question was unethical - indicating that he himself had ♦’s (he did not). Chuck demanded that I check Alex’s hand. Alex is upset that Chuck has been allowed back into the club but that Thorlief has not. Hans said that I was failing in my duty as director.....Enough! This really is too silly for four ‘grown-ups’? Perhaps ‘cavemen’ is an apt description?

Rather than issue them with clubs to fight it out I will ensure that they play in the same direction next week(s) and so do not meet! Let’s hope that they have all matured when the numbers come down and we are back to Howell movements.

Let’s start with Chuck/Thirlief. There is no comparison. Thorlief behaved abysmally (repeatedly) and is most definitely banned for life and longer. Chuck simply had to adjust to playing in a club where the standard of play is not what he is used to. He misbehaved but has served his time. He appears to be a changed person now and knows what he will not get away with. Mind you, he has been a bit testy lately

Onto Chuck’s complaints - If an opponent asks you a question about your partner’s bidding or the system you play, you are obliged to answer (please translate if necessary, Alex). Chuck also got ‘upset’ when another opponent opened 1♣ with only 2 ♣’s and there was no alert. I’ve been all through this before. The prepared ♣ is common on continental Europe but not in the USA. The rules for alerts keep changing. In UK you have to alert if an opening 1NT is anything but 12-14 and if a 1♣ or 1♦ opening may be less than 4 cards. As the Brits outnumber the Yanks in our club then should I say that a 15-17 NT and all 1♣/♦ openings less than 4 card need alerting? And the club has a very large number of beginners, some would have no idea what an alert is or what you were talking about if you stated ‘transfer’. The whole bridge world has gone crazy with the ever changing alert rules.

However, just to keep Chuck and a few others happy, I include some *guidelines* as to what I think is applicable to **this** club. But please don’t bother to call out for the director if a bid is not alerted etc. And note that many continental players play a 1♣ opening that may be 2 cards; don’t call me if it is not alerted, I’m not interested. I am also not interested if what I say is not current ACBL (or whatever) practice. It is just common sense.

And what if your partner gives an incorrect explanation of your bid? You should inform the opponents as soon as possible. If you are dummy or declarer that means after the bidding has finished but before the opening lead. If you are defending then you can say nothing until the hand is over. A stickler for the rules really should know this! Shouldn’t he?

And as for me failing as a director? Possibly, everybody is entitled to their opinion and the World (at least Europe) is a democracy with freedom of expression. I have not taken a director’s course – I took over the club(s) as there was nobody else and I have simply read a lot. Strange how a *number* of people have congratulated me on the way I run the clubs, the news sheets, etc. Anyway, if anybody feels that they can do better – then give it a go! I am more than willing to loan out my equipment etc to anybody who wants to run session(s). I would love to be able to simply play bridge without having all the hassle of directing the session, scoring, trivial director calls, no partner etc. I believe that Soi 4 can be booked virtually anytime. So instead of continually criticising – show us what **you** can do!

Questions and Alerts

Now even some relatively experienced players seem to have difficulty in recognising which bids should be alerted and which not. Indeed, as bidding develops, more bids become ‘standard’ and there is no need for an alert, whereas there would have been a few years ago. The ‘rules’ simply keep on changing. I will give a rough guide-line here of what I think is applicable to our club.

First of all, the NT range. The rules keep changing here, and at our club we have people playing both the strong and the weak NT. I think it’s up to people to ask if you don’t know the opponent’s range. And 4 or 5 card majors, better minor or short ♣? Again, ask if you don’t know. Easiest, of course, is for people to fill out a convention card. Anyway, I give a few tips here: -
The guide-lines I set out may not all be current practice, but are what I believe are applicable to our club. For example, splinters at the 4 level are not normally alerted; since very few play splinters at our club, I think all splinters should be alerted. What is current practice elsewhere may not be relevant to our club. Bear in mind that we have a large number of non-experienced players, be patient. *Most* players are here to enjoy themselves.

Alertable	Not Alertable
Stayman if it does not guarantee a 4 card major	Normal Stayman
Puppet Stayman and replies	Jacoby transfers to a major
Transfers to minor(s)	
Natural 2♦/♥/♠ to a 1NT opening	Possible 3 card 1♣/♦ openings
A 1♣ opening if it may be 2 card	Whether you play 4 or 5 card majors
Splinters	Cue bid of opponent’s suit
4♣ (Gerber) if bid in a suit sequence	4♣ (Gerber) after a NT bid
Strong Opening 2♦/♥/♠	Any type of Blackwood
Multi 2♦ and subsequent conventional bids	Responses to Blackwood/Gerber
2♣ opening if other than 22/3+ or game forcing low level direct penalty doubles	Weak 2’s
Strong/Intermediate jump overcalls	
Weak jump shifts	2♣ opening if standard (22/3+ or g.f.)
Any bid which you think opponents need to know	Negative (sputnik) doubles
	Weak jump overcalls
	Strong jump shifts
	A bid which partner may have forgotten

A note on questions. During the auction, you may ask questions (to the partner of the opponent who made the bid) *at your turn*. Unless it affects your action, I generally recommend not asking questions until the end of the auction. For example, do not ask opponents what type of Blackwood they are playing or how many Aces etc have been shown, wait until after the auction unless it affects a decision that you may make. It is also unwise to ask if a natural response to a 1NT opening is forcing (unless you intend to bid) as opponents may not know. If you are defending and you are on lead, then you should ask questions before leading. When you lead, it should always be face down and you say ‘Questions partner?’ or ‘OK?’. Your partner may then ask questions before the opening lead is revealed. If you are not on lead and partner has a propensity to lead face up, then ask him to lead face down, especially if you have a question.

Before we start, this section is rather advanced and beginners should perhaps ignore it. It has been included because of Chuck's **insistence**!

Now in the prolonged discussion with Hans/Chuck on Monday, Chuck said that I should include my own bad bids in the news sheets, and **in particular** that I should include my pass (which he said was a very poor bid) on board 6 of Friday 9th. So I intended to, but I thought that I would type up the hand (it is reproduced below) for Chuck's comment before I published it. I gave it to Chuck on Friday 16th and after 5 minutes he came back to me; saying that he had only bothered to read the first few lines! - because both the bidding and the hands were incorrect!! Now the board had not yet been re-shuffled from the previous Friday and I showed it to him – he said that I had clearly changed the board (he claims that the South hand had only 2 ♦'s). He also said that West did not double. Total crap of course, with no double from West then I obviously would simply bid 3NT with my North hand. I am used to Hans calling me a liar, but it appears that it is catching and Chuck is trying it too. *You are treading on thin ice, guys.* Anyway, according to Chuck, I not only re-arranged the hands in the board but I also lied about the bidding! Talk about conspiracy theories! Now as it happens, this board was played against Roy and Janine and Roy remembered the bidding and the hand – he most certainly recollects the bidding, his double, the fact that he held *exactly* ♦AQxxx and his partner ♦KJ doubleton and an ace. Since Roy is bigger than Chuck, I guess that's why Chuck did not also call him a liar?

Dealer:	♠ J1062	West	North	East	South
East	♥ AQ9		(me)		(Chuck)
Both vul	♦ 1075				
	♣ K86	-	-	pass	1NT (1)
		pass	2♣	pass	2♦
♠ 85	N	♠ A943	dbl	pass (2)	pass
♥ 10753	W E	♥ 862			
♦ AQ982	S	♦ KJ			
♣ 52		♣ 10973		(1) 15-17	
	♠ KQ7				
	♥ KJ4				The contract went one down, 200 to E-W. 3NT went 2 down at other tables so also 200 to E-W.
	♦ 643				
	♣ AQJ4				

Anyway, despite Chuck's protestations to the contrary, this is the **exact** hand and bidding. Chuck said that I should have bid 3NT at (2), I don't think so.

Let's check on what all of North's options at (2) mean: -

- re dbl = we can make 2♦, teach 'em a lesson.
- 2♥ = weak, to play
- 2♠ = weak, to play
- 3♣ = whatever you play with no double
- 3♥ = whatever you play with no double (Chuck and I play Smolen)
- 3♠ = whatever you play with no double (Chuck and I play Smolen)

That, I hope, is all obvious, and leaves pass, 3♦, 2NT and 3NT.

I believe that a sensible use of these bids is: -

2NT = invitational, with a ♦ stop

3NT = to play, with a ♦ stop

pass = forcing (but not game forcing)

: opener should bid - 2NT = min with a ♦ stop, 3NT = max with a ♦ stop
or else his cheapest 3 card major with no stop.

3♦ = game forcing

: opener should bid - 3NT with a ♦ stop or else his cheapest 3 card major.

In the actual example, the bidding would then go: -

1NT pass 2♣ pass
2♥ pass 2♠ all pass

You could choose to elaborate on this scheme along the Lebensohl principles: 2♦ forces a redouble and then all bids (2NT, 3NT, 3♥, 3♠) show a stop whereas the same bid directly denies a stop. There are numerous other permutations. I don't see that having pass showing a 4 card ♦ suit is at all sensible. Nor does pass as a suggestion to play in 2♦ doubled have any merit whatsoever (redouble!).

Chuck thinks that this is all nonsense. After a double he says that North should pass with 4♦'s, redouble with 5♦'s and bid NT with 3♦'s. Talk about nonsense!! Now perhaps Chicago citizens are used to taking a beating, but I am not (3NT goes minus two). So I asked Joe and Paul (Ire) what they would bid at (2). These two are certainly the best pair around at the moment and the best bidders (apart from myself, of course? - and Chuck on a good day?). They both agreed that it was a difficult problem and a situation that very few partnerships will have discussed. Joe favoured pass (the bid I found at the table) and Paul favoured 3♦ (my other choice – but is it game forcing? - I am not sure that the North hand is worth a game force when there is no major suit fit and ♦'s may not be stopped). But 3♦ is obviously best if partner is likely to pass 2♦ doubled! Anyway, broad agreement, and they both agreed with me that 3NT is silly and that the problem is far from trivial.

I asked Chuck if he would send the problem off to the bidding competition of his ACBL magazine. I got no comment – apparently with the hand and bidding given North should simply bid 3NT and happily go two down? Paul, Joe and myself are not of the same opinion.

Chuck may think it's trivial, but I have sent it off to an English bidding competition. Perhaps Paul could ask his peers when he returns to Ireland?

Incidentally, there is a fairly similar situation playing transfers: -

1NT pass 2♦ dbl
?

redouble shows good ♦'s and suggests the possibility of playing in 2♦ re-doubled, but pass simply shows 2♥'s and partner is expected to bid.

The bottom line? The double in the actual sequence was perhaps unwise – it gave N-S the opportunity to avoid 3NT (minus two) which would otherwise have automatically been bid. N-S should have been able to take advantage and not simply blunder into a 3NT contract when neither has a semblance of a ♦ stop.

The bottom bottom line. If you insist that I should write up a hand where you consider that I have made a poor bid, don't be surprised if it is not me who turns out to have made the bad bid. And don't try to wriggle out of it by alleging that I have altered the hands or the bidding (other people can remember too).

The Law again

Board 15 from Mon 12th, love all.

Apart from me apparently failing in my duties as a director, it appears that the news-sheets have much to be desired?? If I say a bid is bad, then Hans believes that I should demonstrate why. As it happens I have a fine example from last Monday and am only too pleased to oblige, and guess who the E-W pair were who conceded -300 on this part-score deal were? (Editor's note – Hans and Chuck.

Dealer: ♠ AQ982

South ♥ A5

N-S vul ♦ K983

♣ 63

♠ 75 N ♠ 1062

♥ KJ1096 W E ♥ Q42

♦ A2 S ♦ Q654

♣ KQ87 ♣ J109

♠ KJ4

♥ 873

♦ J107

♣ A542

Table A:

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

Table B:

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
1♥	1♠	2♥ (1)	2♠
pass (2)	pass	3♥ (3)	all pass
pass	3♠ (4)	pass	pass
pass (5)			

Table C:

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
1♥	1♠	2♥ (1)	2♠
pass (2)	pass	3♥ (3)	pass
pass	3♠ (4)	pass	pass
pass (5)			

This board was played 9 times on Monday and there were a number of final contracts. 2♠ was reached 6 times and always made 9 tricks. Presumably the bidding was as Table A. Fine. But should E-W let N-S play in a comfortable 2♠? Of course not, especially when non-vulnerable – but who should make the push to 3♥? Now I went over this in considerable detail in news-sheet 31. It was virtually the same scenario; E-W have 8 trumps and should compete to the two level. However, it is permissible to go ‘one too many’ and the player to do this must be the one in the pass-out seat. West should not bid 3♥ at (2) – that would show 6 ♥’s.

So, should East bid 3♥ at (3)? Now this really is a miserable hand and some players would not even bid 2♥ at (2) (but they should). Anyway, you have possibly stretched by bidding 2♥ at (2) so why bid 3 ♥ at (3)? The answer is (as I said before) that it really has little to do with how good your hand is – it is the total number of trumps that count in these fairly evenly matched competitive situations. Pass is quite reasonable, but ardent followers of the law would bid ‘one more’. Excellent. Now 3♠ at (4) is much the same. North suspects that his side has only 8 trumps, but with a nice hand it seems better to try for 9 tricks.

That should be an end to it! E-W have pushed N-S up to the 3 level with only 8 trumps – it may or may not make. One thing is for sure, E-W should certainly leave it there. Bidding 4♥ at (5) or at any time is suicidal. Now guess which pair did? Why, the very same pair who pooh-hooed this argument in news-sheet 31. Hans wants me to explain things – fine. But what’s the point if people simply ignore what I say?

Explaining What I Say!

Board 20 from Mon 12th, both vul.

In news-sheet 62 I said that after partner opens 1♠, a response of 2♥ should guarantee 5 ♥'s. Here is an example of how it goes wrong if opener does not appreciate this: -

Dealer:	♠ KQJ86	West	North (A)	East	South
West	♥ QJ10				
both vul	♦ AKJ	pass (1)	1♠	pass	2♥
	♣ 104	pass	3♦ (2)	pass	3NT (3)
		pass	pass	pass	
♠ 72	N ♠ 10943				
♥ A95	W E ♥ 76				
♦ 2	S ♦ Q9876				
♣ J986532	♣ A7	(1) I can name a few who would open 3♣! Pass is the only sensible bid.			
	♠ A5				
	♥ K8432				
	♦ 10543				
	♣ KQ				

Well then? A rather silly 3NT was reached, why? After South's 2♥ response North most certainly has values for game. 3♦ is forcing, so bid that and wait and see? Unfortunately South is now in a quandary. Support ♠'s with ♠Ax? Raise to 4♦? Rebid a motley 5 card ♥ suit? 3NT with a ♣ stop? Nothing is really attractive and he chose the latter of the evils. Of course the fault lies with North; South's 2♥ bid guarantees 5 ♥'s – the problems faced by South because of the lack of bidding space shows why 2♥ should guarantee 5 ♥'s!! North has excellent ♥'s and must simply agree the suit. North should bid 4♥ unless you play 3♥ as forcing (it's not unless you agree).

And now onto the play. Obviously 3NT was hopeless and got the deserved bad score (it went -1), but it was not a complete bottom. Two other pairs reached the same silly 3NT but another pair managed to go -2 in 4♥! Now the key here is that declarer must think at trick one (later is too late!). You get the ♦2 lead in 4♥, what do you play from dummy?

Count your tricks. 4 ♠'s (probably 5), 4 ♥'s, 2 ♦'s and a ♣. So eleven. You can do nothing about the two missing aces, but with ample tricks you do not need the ♦ finesse! You have 11+ tricks without it! Of course, as the cards lie the defence will get a ♦ ruff if they defend perfectly (you win ♦A, lead a trump, West wins, over to East's ♣A and West gets a ♦ ruff). But you still have 10 absolutely cold tricks. Take the totally unnecessary ♦ finesse at trick one and you deserve the resulting minus two (and to be written up!). And, of course, should the ♦ finesse be necessary, you can always take it later.

What actually happened was horrendous! ♦2 lead won by the ♦Q, 6♦ back (low card requesting a ♣ - McKenney) and ruffed, over to ♣A, another ♦ ruff and the ace of trumps to cap it off.

The bottom lines?

- When you have enough tricks, don't take unnecessary risks. Take the lead and try to clear trumps. Think at trick one. Don't do prematurely what you can keep for later (if necessary).
- And in the bidding, a 2♥ response to a 1♠ opening promises 5 ♥'s. Opener should normally support with 3 ♥'s.

Responding to Partner's Double

Board 5 from Monday 12th, N-S vul.

North (B)	South (H)	West	North	East	South
♠ 54	♠ AKJ2	-	pass	1♦	dbl
♥ 9653	♥ K872	pass	2♦ (1)	pass	2♥
♦ AQ974	♦ 6	pass	pass	pass	
♣ 53	♣ KJ109				

The correct final contract, but West (Chuck) said what he thought of North's bidding when dummy came down – and asked me to write it up in the news-sheet! Here's the gist of it: - 2♦ at (1) cannot be natural. Very occasionally it is correct to pass for penalties when you hold a good solid suit, but that really is the exception – you do not often get rich by passing a take-out double of a 1 level contract when declarer sits over you. So with a ♦ suit it is usually best to bid 1NT (6-10 pts). But not if you have a 4 card major! And what should a 2♦ response at (1) mean? Equal length (normally 4-4) in the majors (thus giving partner a choice) and the values to at least compete to the two level. This North hand should simply respond 1♥.

2♥ was reached by most pairs and scored above average. Just one pair passed 1♦ doubled; it went minus one (100) but that's a bottom for N-S when they can collect +110 for 2♥.

A Mis-fit

Board 9 from Monday 12th, E-W vul.

North (C)	South (F)	North	South (me)
♠ Q109753	♠ 2	2♠ (1)	pass
♥ KQ43	♥ A		
♦ 2	♦ AK98764		
♣ A5	♣ J1062	(1) weak	

This board had an enormous range of final contracts, ranging from 6NT(!) to just 2♠. First of all, this was the bidding at one table. I don't like the 2♠ opener for two reasons – (a) the hand is too strong and (b) it contains a ♥ suit. Anyway, looking at the South hand, what would you bid if partner had opened 2♠? 3♦ is played as forcing by most pairs, the hand is a mis-fit, pass!

But what should North open? I would open 1♠, a possible sequence is then 1♠ - 2♦ - 2♥ - 3♦ - pass. Nobody found this sequence, one other pair managed to stop in 2♠, four were in 3NT and then one each of 4♦ and 5♦.

This is a mis-fit hand, avoid NT (I've said that many times before). I agree that it's difficult to stop low, but 4♦(-1) is better than 3NT(-3).

And what happened? 2♠ made (or made +1), every other contract went down (4♦ got a good score at just -1). It looks like the declarer in 6NT played it well, it was only minus 5.

The bottom lines. Stop a.s.a.p. with mis-fits. Do *not* play mis-fits in NT.

Another Mis-fit?

Board 4 from Monday 12th, both vul.

West (D)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ -	♠ Q10542	2♣ (1)	pass	2♦	pass
♥ AKQ73	♥ 2	2♥	2♠ (2)	dbl (3)	pass
♦ A42	♦ QJ106	3♣ (4)	pass	3NT (5)	pass
♣ AKJ52	♣ 976	4♣ (6)	pass	4NT	all pass

This board again had an enormous range of final contracts, ranging from 6♥(!) to just 2♥. This was the bidding at one table. I don't like the 2♣ opener for two reasons – (a) it's debatable if the hand is within one trick of game and (b) two suiters are best bid naturally.

I would open 1♥ (and subsequently jump to 3♣, game forcing). One big advantage of this approach is that you can show both suits if you get ♠ pre-emption from the opponents. There is virtually no chance of the hand being passed out when you are void in ♠'s. Anyway, who am I to disagree with West? So let's look at the rest of the auction.

North had a reasonable hand with ♠ AK987, but I don't like bidding here (2) and I would like a 6 card suit. If you wish to interfere with a strong 2♣ auction, then do so *at your first bid*, before opponents have had a chance to exchange information. Anyway, double at (3) was penalties – generally stating that East has no support for West's ♥ suit and believes that 2♠ doubled may be the best contract. If I was West with 3 aces and two kings opposite a partner who wished to penalize the opponents and had no ♥ fit, I would certainly pass (2♠ doubled nets 800 for E-W). Anyway, who am I to disagree with West? He elected to pull the double into 3♣, up to him. And what can we say about East's 3NT? The other two suits stopped so obvious? I'm not so sure (partner has no ♠'s since he bid on over the double), but I'll let it ride. West's 4♣ at (6) was natural, saying that he did not like 3NT. For once, I agree with West's bid here. And how about East's final 4NT? Since partner did not like 3NT then this is a very poor bid – I would most certainly bid 5♣.

And what happened? 4NT got what it deserved – minus two, a 2nd bottom – it was only outshone by the pair in 6♥. I don't know the bidding at other tables, but 6♥ went minus 4 for the undisputed bottom (so the West hand is not a 2♣ opener!). 5♣ at another table made exactly and that score (+600) was only topped by 2♠ doubled that went for 800. Our dynamic duo had *two* chances for an excellent score (2♠* or 5♣) – but blew it!

The bottom lines? Be wary of opening 2♣ on strong two-suiters. 2♣ openings are one trick short of game in their own hand with a major suit (or a balanced 22+). Respect partner's preference for a penalty if you have top cards. Do not bid NT with a mis-fit. If partner pulls 3NT, do not bid 4NT!!

1NT opening out of range

Board 16 from Monday 12th, E-W vul.

South (E)	After the Monday session Chuck and Hans got together to tell me some of the many things that I am doing wrong in the running of the club. Chuck
♠ 103	was upset that an opponent had opened 1NT on this hand. I asked what
♥ AKJ2	more I can do – I repeatedly write up about opening 1NT out of range or
♦ KJ2	with singletons. Chuck said that a procedural penalty (adjusted score) was in
♣ AK76	order. Hans was silent! Why? Back in news-sheet 56 I gave a pair a zero score when one opened 1NT with a 22(!!) count. Hans said that I cannot adjust the
	score – it was his partner! If Hans cannot keep his protégé in check with <i>way-out-of-line</i> bids, how does he expect me to control the whole club?

Stayman, transfers etc after a 2NT opening?

Board 5 from Friday 16th, N-S vul.

North	South (G)	North	South
♠ AK6	♠ Q1043	2♦	2♥
♥ AKQ4	♥ J1072	2NT	3NT
♦ K6	♦ A4	pass	
♣ K983	♣ 1052		

What do you think of this bidding? The 2♦ was strong (I think), 2♥ was a relay and apparently 2NT then showed a balanced hand of about 22 points? OK I guess, but what about South's 3NT bid?

It makes no difference if your 2NT bid is bid directly or via 2♣ or via 2♦, most people play Stayman and Transfers (or Baron/Flint or Puppet Stayman or Niemeijer or some other method of finding major suit fits). At the end of the hand I suggested to South that Stayman and Transfers were applicable here – standard practice (especially with *two* 4 card majors)? He said not so. I don't believe him. Sometimes I wonder why Sam Stayman even bothered.

And what happened? The board had been played just once before - 4♥ made exactly. '*There – you see, the 4-4 fit does not play better*' gloated South. Nonsense. As it happens North also had precisely 2 ♦'s, ♥'s were 4-1 and 10 tricks were made. Give North 3 or 4 ♦'s and it's a different story with a ♥ contract easily making more tricks, as it is if ♥'s are 3-2. Even with this *very* fortunate distribution of the cards, 4♥ still plays better and made 11 tricks on two subsequent replays of the board. 3NT+1 only scraped an average score because one pair went one down in 6♥. It went against the grain, but Hans had to agree with me! I note that 3 of the 6 tables played it in the inferior 3NT – listening to the wrong people? The bottom line? Look for the 4-4 major suit fit. Think I've said that before.....

Now I fully appreciate that Chuck and Hans want to get back at me, and ganging up would seem to be a good idea? But they really should co-ordinate their efforts better than this! Keep it coming guys, I can take it and it keeps the news-sheets entertaining - but can you make it a bit more challenging for me?

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: 4♥. You can bid a forcing 3♦ first if you really want to, but you must subsequently support partner. Partner's 2♥ bid promises 5 ♥'s.
- Hand B: 1♥. Partner has asked you to bid a suit. You have a 4 card major – so bid it. Without a 4 card major 1NT would be correct. Do not pass with this type of hand – you will get a poor score even if you manage to defeat 1♦.
- Hand C: Pass or 1♠. A bit strong for a weak 2♠ opening, but 2♠ would be wrong in any case – do not pre-empt when you have an outside 4 card major. I would open 1♠ (and rebid 2♥).
- Hand D: I prefer 1♥ to 2♣, but that is probably a personal preference. It is often better not to open 2♣ with two-suited hands.
- Hand E: 1♣. Do not open an out-of-range 1NT if Chuck is at the table, it simply gets him going and complaining to me.
- Hand F: Pass. A mis-fit. 3♦ would be forcing.
- Hand G: 3♣. Stayman (or whatever, in search of the golden 4-4 major suit fit)
- Hand H: Double. An easy one to finish with. This is a classic take-out double.