



Last week's winners: Monday 8/3/04

Friday 12/3/04

1st Alex/Jeff 69%
 2nd John G/John 60%

1st Chuck/Terry 58%
 2nd Dave/Norman 58%

Bidding Quiz**Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.**

Hand A Hand B With Hand A partner opens 1♠. You respond 2♣ and partner rebids 2♦. What is your bid now?

♠ Q3 ♠ K102
 ♥ J42 ♥ Q54
 ♦ AK3 ♦ J92
 ♣ AKQ85 ♣ Q932

With Hand B partner opens 1NT, what is your bid?

Hand C Hand D With Hand C partner opens 1♠, what is your response?

♠ A1063 ♠ 54
 ♥ KJ5 ♥ Q9
 ♦ 532 ♦ K107653
 ♣ Q53 ♣ AKQ

With Hand D you open 1♦ and partner responds 1♠. You rebid 2♦ (or perhaps 2♣ if you really want to for some strange reason). Anyway, partner rebids 2♠, what do you do?

About Bulls and China ShopsBoard 23 from Monday 8th, both vul

North (A)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ Q3	♠ AKJ94	-	-	-	1♠
♥ J42	♥ 9	pass	2♣	pass	2♦
♦ AK3	♦ QJ1042	pass	6NT (1)	pass	pass
♣ AKQ85	♣ J7	pass			

What can we say? A totally ludicrous contract with 5 ♥ losers off the top. And you certainly can't blame South. So what should North bid at (1)? He needs to know more about South's hand before just charging in like a bull in a china shop, any contract could be correct; the solution is 4th suit forcing. So 2♥ at (1). South's primary duty after the 4th suit is to show a stop (bid 2NT). Without a stop here South bids 3♦ which shows 5 ♦'s and denies a ♥ stop. Hopefully 6♦ or 6♠ or 6♣ is then reached and a silly 6NT contract avoided. It really is not good enough for an experienced player to say *'well you should have a ♥ stop as you must have points somewhere'*. Also, of course, ♥ is the problem suit and South may hold something like ♥ K73. This is a certain stop only if South is declarer and invoking the 4th suit is the way to ensure this, you can be pretty certain of a ♥ lead on the bidding.

♠ AK1094 Now I know that some of you might be saying 'I don't remember that hand'.
 ♥ KQ7 Well, actually, I lied. The South hand above is what North deserved to see
 ♦ Q642 appearing on the table. In actual fact South held this hand and 6NT made easily
 ♣ 2 when the ♦'s split 3-3. No justice, eh? Is 6NT a candidate for worst bid of the year?
 It would be a front runner if 6NT lost the deserved 5 ♥ tricks off the top.

The Beginner's Page

Responder's 2nd bid cont.

Last week we covered when opener supported our suit, so now we'll look at what to do if partner introduces a new suit.

Let's suppose that partner has opened 1♥, we responded 1♠, and partner then bids 2♦. Partner has shown us that he has two suits, but what we need to know is, is partner weak, strong, or in-between? How strong is a 2♦ rebid (and what about a 3♦ rebid)?

Let's consider these three sequences: -

(a) 1♥ - 1♠ - 2♦ and (b) 1♥ - 1♠ - 3♦ and (c) 1♥ - 1♠ - 4♦

Now first of all, sequence (c). This uses up bushels of bidding space and goes past 3NT. It really is of no importance as a natural bid and we shall ignore it. Thus we only have two bidding sequences for 3 hand types. The generally accepted approach is that we use sequence (a) for both weak and in-between hands. The 2♦ bid is not forcing but responder will only pass if he is very weak (say 5-7 pts) and definitely prefers ♦'s to ♥'s.

Thus sequence (b) is for strong hands and in Standard American it is game forcing.

So responder knows a lot about opener's hand. He knows two suits and also has some indication about strength. With Hands 1-6 partner has opened 1♥, we bid 1♠ and partner rebid 2♦. What is your second bid? :-

Hand 1	Hand 2	With Hand 1 you should bid 2♥. Partner is not interested in your ♣ suit and so you have to choose which of his suits you prefer. With equal length, always put him back into his first bid suit. Do <i>not</i> bid 2NT, that shows 11-12 points
♠ A754	♠ A754	With Hand 2 you definitely prefer ♦'s. You are minimum and it's best simply to pass.
♥ 94	♥ 74	
♦ 87	♦ Q872	
♣ Q9852	♣ 9852	
Hand 3	Hand 4	With Hand 3 you just love ♦'s. You are non-min for the initial 1♠ bid and so you have sufficient values to show your mild enthusiasm with a 3♦ bid.
♠ A752	♠ AJ10752	Hand 4 is a total mis-fit. You don't like either of his suits but fortunately there is a way out. Bid 2♠. This shows a weak hand with long ♠'s and partner should pass. Do <i>not</i> bid 2NT.
♥ 7	♥ 9	
♦ KJ987	♦ 7	
♣ J52	♣ Q9852	
Hand 5	Hand 6	With Hand 5 you don't like partner's suits and have both of the unbid suits stopped. So 2NT? No, No, NO. That shows 11 points and mis-fits do not play well in NT. Bid 2♥.
♠ AJ54	♠ A984	Hand 6 is interesting. Many players would pass as they prefer ♦'s to ♥'s. This is incorrect. Partner may have up to about 16 points and game may just be there. Bid 2♥, it's not quite enough for 2NT. Partner has 5 ♥'s and if it turns out that he is minimum
♥ 97	♥ Q7	then he will pass and no harm is done. On good day he will bid on and 4♥ or 3NT may be reached. Partner knows that you may have only 2 ♥'s (you did not support first time).
♦ 87	♦ K74	
♣ KJ765	♣ J985	

Raise 1NT to 2NT? – Part 1Board 19 from Monday^{8th}, N-S vul.

I keep on saying the same things week after week, and I guess I'll have to keep at it as long as 4 out of 7 pairs get it wrong? Devalue flat hands!

West	East (B)	West	North	East	South
♠ A73	♠ K102	-	-	pass	pass
♥ KJ63	♥ Q54	1NT (1)	pass	2NT (2)	pass
♦ A73	♦ J92	pass (3)	pass		
♣ A65	♣ Q932				

- (1) 16 points. But totally flat so deduct a point. Then that's 15, but the hand is totally devoid of intermediates. I certainly would not argue if you devalued further and decided to open 1♣ (rebid 1NT over 1♠ from partner, 12-14 points). However, a 1NT opening (15-17) is just about OK.
- (2) Totally flat again, but this time with a few intermediates. Now you need 8-9 points to raise a strong NT to 2NT. This flat hand is only worth 7, so pass.

What happened? The hand was played 7 times and 3 pairs managed to stop in a 'safe' 1NT (one did manage to go down in just 1NT). 2NT was reached twice and 3NT reached twice – all went down. The only E-W + scores were two pairs who stopped in 1NT.

The bottom lines. Two flat hands totalling 24 points do not make 3NT – this hand made just 6 tricks twice, 7 tricks three times and 8 tricks twice. Think I've said that before, cucumber sandwiches? Deduct a point for totally flat (4333 type) shape. If partner does invite with 2NT then you need a *good* 16 or 17 to accept, this West hand is nowhere near and correctly passed 2NT at (3); unfortunately they were already too high.

Raise 1NT to 2NT? – Part 2

Board 1 from Monday^{8th}, love all

West	East
♠ QJ3	♠ 1096
♥ A853	♥ K63
♦ 872	♦ K1094
♣ 865	♣ AKQ

<u>Table A</u>			
West	North	East	South
-	pass	1NT (1)	2♦
2NT (2)	pass	pass	pass

<u>Table B</u>			
West	North	East	South
-	pass	1NT	2♦
2♥ (3)	pass	2♠ (4)	all pass

Table A: (1) A flat (4333) hand yet again. So deducting a point makes it just 14. But then the two 109 combinations are a very good + and so a 1NT opening is in acceptable.

(2) A flat 7 count, so certainly not worth a raise. But after the opponents compete? – Even more reason not to bid 2NT – opponents have a long suit. West should simply pass.

Table B: (3) As I said, I would pass. But this West decided to compete with his 4 card ♥ suit. West meant this as 2♥ bid as natural ...

(4) ... but East thought it was a transfer.

And what happened? Apart from the 2♠ misunderstanding, 4 of the 7 pairs bid too high (2NT or 3NT). 1NT making scored the top. 2♦ by South would have gone two off for a top to E-W. The bottom lines. If you do not have a sound raise to 2NT, don't let the opponents bully you into bidding it. If opponents compete then be wary – they have a long suit against your NT contract. If the opponents compete over your 1NT opening then you have to agree if transfers are still on. See *systems-on, systems-off* last week.

Benjamin Twos Anyone?

I said just last week how Benjamin twos enable you to show your big balanced hands below the level of 3NT. Now that, actually, is not the only advantage of Benjamin twos. They also enable you to show strong hands (particularly a major suited hand) without the fear of a one level opening being passed out. At least, that's how they should work

Now the concept of Benjamin (or strong) twos is playing tricks. When we come on to cover two of Monday's hands we shall see that not everybody completely understands the concept of playing tricks. Luckily enough, I wrote a booklet on Hand evaluation and Playing Tricks a year or two back and I think it's time to reproduce the section on playing tricks: -

Playing Tricks

For most of this book, we use the 4-3-2-1 Milton Work hand evaluation as defined previously. There are other good methods (such as losing trick count) but the 4-3-2-1 method is universally accepted and is simple. For two sections in this book, however, we do refer to the concept of playing tricks. The sections concerned are strong opening 2 bids and pre-empts.

Playing tricks are tricks that you reasonably expect to make if you are playing the contract, and are different from defensive tricks. For the purpose of evaluating playing tricks, we assume that our long suit(s) break fairly evenly between the other 3 hands. Now many players are confused by the concept of playing tricks. For example, a nine playing trick hand does not mean a hand that will make 9 tricks opposite a completely bust partner. The playing trick philosophy assumes reasonable breaks around the table in both points and distribution. A trivial example: -

♠ 64 ♥ AKQJ1052 ♦ 64 ♣ J7	Obviously both of these hands have only 7 guaranteed tricks, but it really would be a little too pessimistic to treat the 2 nd as the same as the 1 st . Kings and Queens are worth something.
♠ K4 ♥ AKQJ1052 ♦ Q4 ♣ KJ	

So, the generally accepted philosophy is that Kx is ½ a playing trick, AQ(x) is 1½ etc.

♠ K4 ♥ AQJ752 ♦ 64 ♣ AQ7	This hand contains 7½ playing tricks. 5½ in ♥'s, 1½ in ♣'s and ½ in ♠'s.
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When our long suit is not solid or semi-solid, the estimation of playing tricks is more tricky. This suit is worth about 3½ playing tricks. With normal distribution, it may make either 3 or 4.

♥ KJ8652

Now this concept of playing tricks has been around for eons, and is very useful for evaluating strong opening bids and also for pre-emptive bids. There is, however, one important point that is generally overlooked. It's spelled out on the next page.

3.1.1 The Problem with Playing Tricks

Now way back in the Hand Evaluation section we studied playing tricks. The concept has been around for decades and that is how we evaluate our strong two openings (and has been since the birth of Bridge). In the next section we will be studying responder's reply to a strong two and how he should evaluate his hand. Now I would not be so pretentious (pretentious – Moi ?) as to suggest that the whole concept of playing tricks and opening twos is in error, but there is one major point that needs considering.

I have not mentioned this earlier, but there is a flaw in the playing trick calculation! Take the simple example AQx. This is defined as 1½ playing tricks as the Q stands a 50% chance of making. Actually, this is incorrect. A more realistic figure is 66% as it makes if RHO or partner holds the K (or if LHO leads the suit). Kx is equally undervalued at ½, it is really much better if partner has values. These flaws are easily demonstrated by considering the following suit: -

AQx opposite Kxxx

This is defined as 2 playing tricks (1½ opposite ½). In reality, it is of course 3 (or even 4!).

So what is to be done? We are not going to adjust the requirements for a strong opening two bid, but responder does need to look carefully at his cards. In the next section, I say something like 'reasonably expect to make a trick' and it is responder who should take this under valuation of playing tricks (when partner has something) into account. A holding such as Kx should be considered as a *more than* reasonable expectation of a trick, so should the Q of trumps.

Remember when we said that ♥ KJ8652 may make either 3 or 4 tricks and should be evaluated as 3½? If partner holds just ♥ Q3 the expectation suddenly springs to 5! (but if partner is void then the expectation is somewhat less).

So should we re-evaluate our criteria for a strong two? No - it is best to leave it all up to responder as he knows that opener has values and can readjust. Opener cannot do this as even the current calculation may be optimistic if partner is bust. We need to get to dummy to take our 50% finesse and our AQx is probably only one trick if dummy has no entry. Our 'adjustments' are only valid if both parties have some values, and only responder knows that.

3.1.2 Strong Twos forcing for one round?

In traditional Acol, a strong two is forcing for one round (with 2NT as a negative). This is also the case with the more modern Benjamin Acol System which has strong 2♥/♠ (via 2♣).

Now this hand is clearly rather an extreme example,
♠ 42 ♥ 32 ♦ 65432 ♣ J632 but you would consider yourself lucky if partner's 2♠ bid was not doubled, and surely it would be lunacy to bid?

There may be a better spot (unlikely), but equally well you may just be adding another hundred or so to the opponent's score or inviting a double. If game is a prospect opposite this heap partner would have opened 2♦ playing Benjamin Twos, which is forcing to game.

So let's use our common sense. As I indicated in the previous section, responder should upgrade any assets that he has; but zero is zero. As little as a king, the queen of trumps or even just 3 or 4 trumps is enough but we can only stretch so far.

These last two pages were something I wrote a few years back. It's a shame that the N-S players of the following two deals had not read them! ...

A Jump to 3♠ after a Benjamin 2♣?

Board 16 from Monday^{8th}, E-W vul.

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ AK107652	♠ 4	pass	2♣ (1)	pass	2♦ (2)
♥ -	♥ K432	pass	3♠ (3)	pass	4♠ (4)
♦ AQ	♦ K954	pass	5♦ (5)	pass	6♠ (6)
♣ KQ85	♣ 9642	pass	pass	pass	

6♠ was hopeless. 4♠ is a good contract (but not 100%), let's see what went wrong: -

- (1) Strong and artificial, but not game forcing.
- (2) Relay.
- (3) 9 playing tricks with ♠'s as trumps. First of all, I do like to play this variation of Benjamin, but it is not universally played – you have to agree it. Many play that a 2♠ rebid here is either 8 or 9 playing tricks and is forcing (as with the traditional Acol Two).
This hand is just about good enough for the 3♠ bid. It is about 9 playing tricks (6½ in ♠'s, 1½ in ♦'s and 1 in ♣'s).
- (4) Partner has said that he can make 9 tricks on his own. South needs very little to raise to game and this is certainly enough. 4♠ is correct here.
- (5) A cue bid, looking for slam. In my view North has stated his hand exactly; South has promised virtually nothing and this is way over the top.
- (6) South thought that his ♦K was good enough for slam. It did not really matter as the bidding is way too high anyway.

A Straightforward Benjamin Two

Board 17 from Monday^{8th}, love all.

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ AKQ986	♠ 10	-	2♣ (1)	pass	2♦ (2)
♥ K32	♥ AJ10765	pass	2♠ (3)	pass	pass (4)
♦ 3	♦ Q6	pass			
♣ AK7	♣ 8432				

Oops; yes, the very next board, 13 tricks were made. Let's see what went wrong this time: -

- (1) Strong and artificial, but not game forcing.
- (2) Relay. Some players would prefer a 2♥ response here, but I personally prefer the 2♦ relay and wait to see what type of strong hand partner has.
- (3) 8½ playing tricks, so this is the correct bid.
- (4) Partner has promised a strong hand where he can make 8 tricks on his own. South needs very little to press on to game and cannot pass with a hand this good. Even if playing that 2♠ promises less than 9 playing tricks an ace is usually enough for game. This may seem difficult to understand; it's 'the problem with playing tricks'. This hand must bid.

So how should the bidding go? I would bid 3♥ at (4) and North then has an easy 4♥. And what happened? Every other table bid 4♠ except one who bid the optimistic 6♠. 12 tricks were there when ♠'s split 3-3. and the ♥Q was doubleton. Nobody found the far superior 4♥ contract! Why not? Playing Standard American how about 1♠ - 1NT - 3♠ - 4♥ - pass ?

The bottom lines – for both of the previous deals.

- Don't overvalue big hands.
- Re-read the previous playing trick section if you play Benjamin (or Strong) twos.
- A Benjamin 2♥/♠ after 2♣ is strong and virtually forcing – only pass with a real heap.
- Responder to a Benjamin (or strong) two should take a very optimistic view of any assets that he has and bid with a reasonable expectation of making a trick.

Candidate(s) for Worst Bid of the Year?

Board 5 from Monday^{8th}, N-S vul.

Enough of talking about dubious bids. Let's get on to the serious stuff; here we have two candidates for the worst bid of the year – and they are on the same board!!

Dealer:	♠ K108654	West	North	East	South
North	♥ 6				
N-S vul	♦ Q83	-	pass (1)	pass	4♥ (2)
	♣ K92	5♣ (3)	pass	pass (4)	dbl
		pass	pass	pass	
♠ AJ7	N	♠ Q932			
♥ 10	W E	♥ KQJ98			
♦ AK42	S	♦ 7			
♣ QJ1075		♣ 864			
	♠ -				
	♥ A75432				
	♦ J10965				
	♣ A3				

- (1) I would open 2♠. But N-S had had a bad session so far and perhaps North thought that his partner would require a better hand for a vulnerable pre-empt? You see the humour of this remark when you see South's bid!
- (2) What can we say about this bid? I don't really want to take up the rest of the page, so I'll restrict it to a few lines. Just a six card suit with one honour and no intermediates, vulnerable (against not) ... I'm sure that even the beginnerest of beginners will realise that this is absolutely appalling? And what was South's 'excuse'? He had a back up 'suit' to run to. 4♥ should, of course, go for a number (in fact, 1700 numbers). My personal opinion is that just because you have had a bad session, there's really no need to spoil it for other people by making a grotesque semi-psyche bid.
- (3) It really is sad to see South get away with such an atrocious bid! Why on earth West thinks that he can make 11 tricks in ♣'s opposite a passed partner when South has shown a strong hand (4♥, vulnerable, should be a good hand!) is beyond me. Either double or pass (and pass partner's double when it comes) are so obvious that this 5♣ bid competes with the 4♥ opening for lunacy. No, I take that back – it's even worse.
- (4) I felt sick (and nearly threw up when partner subsequently turned up with the ♥ 10).

What happened? Unfortunately the scoring is such that I could not award both West and South the zero score that they both asked for, and so N-S got a totally undeserved top. Obviously 4♥ (or 5♦) doubled by South would have been a cold bottom against a sane West, but the nobody has ever accused jef of being sane. Perhaps I can arrange for South and West to partner each other some time in the future?

The bottom lines. An opening 4♥/♠ is a good 8 card suit, and especially good with unfavourable vulnerability. A double of such a 4 level opening shows values. It is not take-out but partner may possibly pull with an unsuitable hand. As it happens West was an experienced player (I know it's difficult to believe), but with a large number of beginners and less experienced players in the club I do not approve of psyches (or semi-psyches) by experienced players. Will the more experienced players please bear in mind the general standard of the club and refrain from making really silly bids.

A 6-2 major suit fit is fine.Board 10 from Monday^{8th}, both vul.

West	East (D)	West	North	East	South
♠ KJ10986	♠ 54	-	-	1♦	pass
♥ 843	♥ Q9	1♠	pass	2♣ (1)	pass
♦ 2	♦ K107653	2♠	pass	2NT (2)	pass
♣ K74	♣ AKQ	pass	pass		

- (1) I don't really see the need to dig up a non-existent suit here, what wrong with 2♦?
 (2) Partner has promised a 6 card ♠ suit and pass is the bid here.

What happened? A mixed bag of results, with E-W going off in just about everything that they bid. There was just one +ve entry in the E-W column. Another pair bid and made 2♠!

The bottom line. When partner re-bids a suit and you have reasonable support (a doubleton) then feel happy that you were not dealt a singleton or void! Pass as quickly as ethically allowed!

Support partner or 1NT?Board 13 from Monday^{8th}, both vul.

North (C)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ A1063	♠ KJ975	-	pass	pass	1♠
♥ KJ5	♥ Q	pass	1NT (1)	pass	3♣
♦ 532	♦ AK4	pass	4♠	pass	pass
♣ Q53	♣ KJ98	pass			

- (1) North thought that he had a problem here. I believe that his thoughts were '*I'm a bit too good for 2♠ but not good enough for 3♠ - so I'll temporise with 1NT which is more encouraging than 2♠*'. Unfortunately, this is totally muddled thinking and incorrect. First of all, 1NT is not more encouraging; in fact both 1NT and 2♠ show the same point range (6-10) but supporting partner is more encouraging as it promises support (as I pointed out in detail last week, 1NT may be any shape). I went over this (direct support being more encouraging) in some detail in news-sheet 50. Anyway, that's all rather irrelevant here, with 4 card support you *always* support rather than bid 1NT. And there is no 'gap' between the 2♠ or 3♠ bid. 2♠ is 6-10, 3♠ is 10(+)-12, but with 10 you have to judge which way to go. This hand has decent trumps, but with the totally flat shape (so no ruffing potential or side suit to set up) the correct bid is 2♠. This is true if you play 4 card or 5 card majors.
- (2) Luckily South had a good hand and did not pass 1NT.

And what happened? 4♠ made and scored just above average as a couple of pairs somehow failed to bid game. The simplest bidding to get to the correct contract is 1♠ - 2♠ - 4♠ - pass. And just a word about the play. Obviously 4♠ is cold (you discard a losing ♦ from the South hand on a ♥), but how do you play the ♠'s? If you 'find' the ♠Q it's an overtrick. Remember '8 ever nine never'? You should play for the drop - but it doesn't hurt to lead the ♠J from the South hand - some Wests will always 'cover an honour with an honour'!

The bottom line. Support with support.

When the 4-4 Fit is not best

Board 13 from Friday 12th, both vul

Now the 4-4 major suit fit is usually best, but there are always exceptions: -

Dealer:	♠ J9	West	North	East	South
North	♥ A862	-	1♦	2♣	dbl (1)
Both vul	♦ AKQ86	pass (2)	2♥	pass	4♠ (3)
	♣ J4	pass	pass	pass	

♠ K5	N	♠ A	(1) Negative, showing both majors.
♥ 109	W E	♥ KQ4	(2) I would jump to 4♣ (The Law), but then I expect that South is always bidding 4♠?
♦ J1072	S	♦ 9543	(3) So then. You have a 4-4 ♥ fit, but play in the fit or is this 8 card suit better as trumps? Especially as this South hand is so weak (in high cards) and has very poor ♥'s, it must be best to play in ♠'s and 4♠ is worth a shot.
♣ Q8653		♣ AK972	
	♠ Q10876432		
	♥ J753		
	♦ -		
	♣ 10		

And what happened? 4♠ made 11 tricks for a good score. It was beaten by the pair in 4♠ doubled (this East hand should not double 4♠). One E-W pair got an excellent score for sacrificing in 5♣ (500 away but a virtual top). This was only beaten when one N-S played in 4♥ and went two down. The bottom line. The 4-4 fit is usually best, but if the suit is very poor then there may be a better spot. An 8 card suit usually makes a good trump suit.

What is a 3 level opening in 4th seat?

Board 9 from Friday 5th, E-W vul.

Dealer:	♠ 874	West	North	East	South
North	♥ AJ875	(Mike)			
E-W vul	♦ KJ743				
	♣ -	-	pass	pass	pass
		3♣	3♥	pass	pass
		pass			
♠ A109	N				
♥ 109	W E				
♦ 82	S				
♣ AKQ965					

3♥ went one down. Mike(Can) was chuckling at the result. North (name withheld upon request) was not amused. He was also not amused when Mike told everybody how well he had done! Actually he didn't do that well, honours were even as 3♥ minus one scored exactly average and 4♣ made or made +1 at other tables. The top result for N-S was 3♦ making, but how does North know whether to bid ♦'s or ♥'s?

But seriously, what does 3♣ mean in 4th seat? Obviously it is not an outright pre-empt (you can simply pass the hand out if you think it's not your hand). It's not defined (as far as I know) but I think that 3♣/♦ should be something along the lines of an Acol opening 3NT – a long solid minor with a smattering of bits elsewhere – inviting partner to bid 3NT with a few bits and pieces (as opposed to a gambling 3NT which promises nothing outside). I would prefer a 7 card suit and I would open 1♣ with this hand, although I feel that 3♣ is not as unreasonable as our un-named North (it was Chuck of course) says!

When Partner Pauses and Passes!

Board 11 from Friday 12th, love all.

It's a statistic. The Director is called more times over problems involving a player thinking for a long time, passing, and his partner subsequently bidding on, than for any other reason.

Dealer:	♠ Q8	West	North	East	South
South	♥ AK10963				
Love all	♦ 953	-	-	-	1♣
	♣ Q6	pass	1♥	1NT (1)	2♣
		2♠	3♥ (2)	pass	pass (3)
♠ KJ542	N	3♠ (4)	4♥ (5)	pass	pass
♥ Q	W E	4♠	dbl	pass	pass
♦ 7642	S	pass			
♣ 953					
	♠ 97		(1) A Sandwich NT. Showing ♠'s and ♦'s?		
	♥ J2		(2) Invitational		
	♦ KQJ				
	♣ AJ10742				

- (3) Something to think about for sure. Is this hand good enough for 4♥? It's close. After a long pause South decided to pass.
- (4) Now obviously West could (should?) simply pass, but he took a view (hoping that partner had a slightly more shapely hand!).
- (5) Here's the problem. North considered this hand only invitational last bid, so why is it now worth game? Because partner paused?? As I said, this type of problem causes more controversy than any other at the Bridge table. After South's pause, North has to pass.

Anyway, West noted the infraction and would have called the Director if he himself was not the Director! And what happened? E-W went two down, so -300. But this was a 2nd top for E-W as every other table but one played in 4♥ scoring anything from 420 to 590. Now I did tell North what I thought and he replied that of course he is always going to bid game as his partner opened. That is inconsistent with his previous non-forcing 3♥ bid!

The bottom lines. If partner makes a long pause and then passes then he has conveyed unauthorised information (that he has something to think about!). You are not allowed to take advantage of this. Now you are not barred from bidding in this situation, but if you do choose to bid then it must be a very obvious bid - one that at least 75% of your peers would make in a similar situation. If you do indeed have something to think about (as South in this case), then if you have made a noticeable pause it's usually best to bid (not pass) and thus avoid controversy.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: 2♥. 4th suit forcing. You have no idea what the best final denomination or contract is. 6NT is likely, but only if partner has a ♥ stop. Bid the 4th suit to find out! Also, if partner has something like ♥ Kx, then it's imperative that he is declarer in 6NT; 4th suit forcing ensures that.
- Hand B: Pass. This is a miserable flat hand. Deduct a point for the totally (4333 type) shape and it's only 7 points, so pass.
- Hand C: 2♠. Not good enough for 3♠ (too flat!).
- Hand D: Pass. You should feel lucky that you have found a 6-2 fit. 2NT is a very poor bid.