

Mon 1 st	1 st Chuck/Terry	63%	2 nd Bob/Dave	55%
Wed 3 rd N-S	1 st John Gavens/Terry	59%	2 nd Jim/Tom	53%
Wed 3 rd E-W	1 st Jo/Guy	65%	2 nd Phil/Jean-Marc	54%
Fri 5 th	1 st Chuck & Ken	57%	2 nd Chris/Paul	55%

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

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A RHO opens 1♠ what do you do?
♠ 94	♠ AQ72	With Hand B you open 1♣ and partner responds 1♦, what do you bid?
♥ AK1095	♥ K98	
♦ AQ954	♦ A7	
♣ 8	♣ AQ72	
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C you open 1♦ and partner bids 1NT. (a) What do you bid? (b) What do you bid if RHO overcalls 2♥?
♠ 9	♠ AQ4	With Hand D you open 1♦, partner bids 1♥, you bid 2♣ and partner bids 2♠ (4 th suit forcing). (a) What do you bid? (b) Suppose you bid 3♣ and partner jumps to 4♦, what now?
♥ 53	♥ -	
♦ AK1098542	♦ J10652	
♣ A10	♣ AQJ65	
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E LHO opens 1♣ and this is passed all of the way round to you. What do you do?
♠ AJ5	♠ KQ92	With Hand F RHO opens 1♣. (a) What do you do? (b) Suppose you double, LHO bids 1♦ and this is passed round to you, what do you do now?
♥ 752	♥ A10965	
♦ Q9542	♦ A102	
♣ J8	♣ 10	
Hand G	Hand H	With Hand G RHO opens 1♣, what do you do?
♠ KQ109	♠ J9853	With Hand H partner passes, RHO opens 1♦, you pass and LHO bids 1NT. Partner and RHO then pass, what do you do?
♥ AJ	♥ KJ3	
♦ 10763	♦ 863	
♣ K105	♣ J8	
Hand J	Hand K	With Hand J partner opens 1♣ and you bid 1♦. Partner then bids 2NT (18-19), what do you do?
♠ 9863	♠ J8	With Hand K LHO opens 1♣ and partner doubles. (a) What do you do? (b) What would you do if RHO had bid 1♦?
♥ 105	♥ J73	
♦ KJ82	♦ K53	
♣ K108	♣ J9832	

That infamous Unusual 2NT (or Michaels) yet againBoard 1 from Monday 1st

Dealer: ♠ Q87642
 North ♥ 876
 Love all ♦ 63
 ♣ QJ

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

♠ -	N	♠ AKJ103
♥ J542	W E	♥ Q
♦ K872	S	♦ J10
♣ AK1042		♣ 97653
	♠ 94	
	♥ AK1095	
	♦ AQ954	
	♣ 8	

- (1) What did you bid with this South hand A in this week's quiz? Double is a possibility (and convert a 2♣ response in 2♦ to show the two-suiter) but most people (including me) prefer a stronger hand for that action. So how about a Michael's cue bid of 2♠ - showing a two-suited hand with ♥'s and minor. Perhaps reasonable, but Michaels (and the UNT) are weak, pre-emptive bids and this South hand really is too good. Now many pairs play that Michaels/UNT are either weak or very strong – but the problem here is that this South hand is not *very* strong. I would simply overcall 2♥ with this South hand and perhaps get a 3♦ bid in later.
- (2) West is very happy with the turn of events – he had a bad hand opposite a 1♠ opener but now that the opponents have charged in things are looking rosey. Of course it's best to pass here and simply wait to see how big a penalty you will get later.
- (3) North has no choice of course.
- (4) And now we see the problem – you cannot bid Michaels (or UNT) with intermediate hands. South has pre-empted himself and cannot now show a decent hand without going to the game level. Michaels is a pre-empt and bidding again here breaks the golden rule – don't bid gain having pre-empted.
- (5) West is extremely happy to be able to apply the axe now at the 4 level.

And what happened? 4♥ doubled went 3 or 4 down (the scoring was unclear) but just 3 down was 500 away and a disaster for N-S.

The bottom lines.

- Michaels (and UNT) are pre-empts. A good 13 points is far too strong.
- Some more experienced players play that they are either weak or very strong. And by very strong I mean just that – close to a 2♣ opener, this South hand is nowhere near.
- With a 5-5 shape hand that is in the middle range, simply overcall the higher ranking suit.
- Michaels (and the UNT) are the most abused conventions out there ... (said that before).

Look for the 4-4 major fit after a 2NT jumpBoard 14 from Monday 1st

Dealer:	♠ J1054					
East	♥ A742		West(B)	North	East(J)	South
Love all	♦ 943		-	-	pass	pass
	♣ 53		1♣	pass	1♦	pass
			2NT (1)	pass	3♠ (2)	pass
♠ AQ72	N	♠ 9863	4♠	all pass		
♥ K98	W E	♥ 105				
♦ A7	S	♦ KJ82				
♣ AQ72		♣ K108				
	♠ K					
	♥ QJ63					
	♦ Q1065					
	♣ J964					

- (1) What did you rebid here with this West hand B in this week's quiz? 2NT is best. This does not deny a 4 card major as this strength showing bid is rarely passed and any 4-4 fit should come to light in subsequent bidding. 3NT is a poor bid, especially as you may miss a 4-4 ♠ fit.
- (2) And what did you bid with this East hand J in this week's quiz? You have a 4 card major and so should not bid 3NT. I prefer to play that any bid is forcing here and I would prefer to play 3♣ as Checkback Stayman (asking opener to bid a 4 card major if he has one) – but this had not been discussed and so East simply bid his ♠ suit.

And what happened? 4♠ was reached at 3 tables and made twice. Although 4♠ is not that great a contract because of the bad split, it is still far better than 3NT which was bid at the other two tables and justifiably went down both times.

The bottom lines: -

- After opener jumps to 2NT (18-19 points) then I think it's best to play any bid as game forcing.
- I also like to play that 3♣ is Checkback Stayman (whether ♣'s have been bid or not) -asking partner to clarify his major suit holdings, but this has to be agreed with partner.
- Either way, you should be able to locate the 4-4 major suit fit.
- The jump to 2NT is 18-19.
- The jump to 3NT is best used as a long solid minor suit.

3NT is usually better than 5♣/♦

Board 11 from Monday 1st

I was asked about this one, in particular South's bid at (4): -

Dealer:	♠ J86	<u>Table A</u>			
South	♥ K107	West	North	East	South(C)
Love all	♦ J763	-	-	-	1♦
	♣ KQ3	pass (1)	1NT (2)	2♥ (3)	4♦ (4)
		pass	5♦	all pass	

♠ KQ743	N	♠ A1052	<u>Table B</u>			
♥ 842	W E	♥ AQJ96	West	North	East	South(me)
♦ -	S	♦ Q	-	-	-	1♦
♣ J8542		♣ 976	pass (1)	1NT (2)	pass	3NT(5)
	♠ 9		all pass			
	♥ 53					
	♦ AK1098542					
	♣ A10					

- Table A (1) This West hand has good shape but is obviously not good enough to double. Over a 1♥ opening an infamous Michaels would not be too bad. But over 1♦ that's out (it shows ♥'s and ♠'s) and pass is probably the most prudent bid. I would overcall 1♠, but then I am me.
- (2) 1NT is a much better bid than 2♦ here.
- (3) East has options here. Double is take-out of ♦'s and I think that either a 2♥ overcall or a double are equally good. If you're interested in what I would actually bid, I too would overcall 2♥.
- (4) I'm not actually certain what South bid here, but they ended up in 5♦ going one down on a ♥ lead. Now I was asked what South should bid here; what did you bid with this South hand C in this week's quiz? I think that this South hand is enormous after partner has bid 1NT and I want (partner) to be in 3NT (at my Table B the bidding was slightly different). Anyway, if you accept my philosophy that this hand wants to play in 3NT if possible, what do you do after the ♥ overcall? The answer is to ask partner if he has a ♥ stop – bid 3♥.
- Table B (5) I was South here and with no interference I simply raised partner to 3NT.

And what happened? 3NT made 12 tricks on a ♥ lead. It would make 3 tricks on a ♠ lead but that is not the issue. 5♦ was 'wrong-sided' so went one down. There were obviously the usual few spurious results.

The bottom lines: -

- In my opinion (and many expert's) it's best to overcall with a 5 card major.
- So I would make a (very) pushy 1♠ overcall with this West hand and I agree with the 2♥ overcall (rather than double) with this East hand.
- If you need a stop in the opponent's suit, cue bid the suit to ask partner.
- Don't worry about no stop in an unbid suit when opponents have bid – partner may have a stop there or it may well not be led.

About 4th suit forcing

Board 6 from Wednesday 3rd

I was also asked about this one, in particular East's bid at (3): -

Dealer:	♠ K652		<u>Table A</u>			
East	♥ 9853		West	North	East(D)	South
E-W vul	♦ K3		-	-	1♦	pass (1)
	♣ 743		1♥	pass	2♣	pass
			2♠ (2)	pass	3♣ (3)	pass
♠ 103	N	♠ AQ4	4♦ (4)	pass	5♦ (5)	all pass
♥ AJ72	W E	♥ -				
♦ AQ987	S	♦ J10652	<u>'Expert Table'</u>			
♣ K9		♣ AQJ65	West	North	East(D)	South
	♠ J987		-	-	1♦	pass
	♥ KQ1064		1♥	pass	2♣	pass
	♦ 4		2♠ (2)	pass	3NT (3)	pass
	♣ 1082		4♦ (6)	pass	4♠ (7)	pass
			4NT	etc. to 6♦		

- Table A: (1) At this vulnerability I would be tempted to bid with this South hand - in fact I did overcall 1♥ at my table and the opponents stopped in 4♦ after a competitive auction. But that's not the issue here.
- (2) 4th suit forcing. Asking partner to describe his hand further.
- (3) Now this is the issue, what should East bid? What did you bid with this East hand D(a) in this week's quiz? Should he show his ♠ stop by bidding NT or should he show his 5th ♣? See 'Expert Table' for what I think.
- (4) I would play 3♦ as forcing here (after the 4th suit) but perhaps it's safer for an unfamiliar partnership to jump.
- (5) What did you bid with this East hand D(b) in this week's quiz. It's pairs and you have gone past 3NT. Partner is looking for a ♦ slam. A cue bid of the ♥ void is possible, but a void in partner's 1st bid suit is not usually an asset. You could cue bid the ♠ A, but that would probably confuse him as you have denied a ♠ stop. Since 5♦ is bound to get a poor score at pairs I would simply bid 6♦.
- 'Expert Table' (3) After partner's 4th suit enquiry you have to describe your hand. The first priority is to bid NT with a stop. 2NT is fine, stating that you have a ♠ stop and leaving the final contract open. I personally would bid 3NT – to tell partner I'm not interested in his ♥'s and to confirm excellent ♠ stops.
- (6) Setting trumps and looking for slam
- (7) A cue bid, showing the ♠ A.

The bottom line: 4th suit forcing asks partner to define his hand further. Most players play that showing a stop for NT is the highest priority and that showing belated support for partner or extra length in a suit of your own is of lower priority and denies a stop in the 4th suit.

Pass and/or double need to be alerted??

Now as it happened on Wednesday I was at a stationary table next to Chuck's stationary table. As one would expect there was always a lot of discussion/dispute at my neighbour's table and I could not help but overhear some of it: - One of our visitors had an exchange with Chuck when Chuck asked why the visitor's partner's conventional double (or it may have been a pass) was not alerted. The visitor explained to Chuck that most passes and doubles need not be alerted. Chuck disagreed. Who's right?

Both are a bit right. Pass and double are both bids and the most recent ACBL document says that 'only passes or doubles with highly unusual or unexpected meanings' need to be alerted. So we just have to determine what 'highly unusual or unexpected' means. I think that for this club it should be a meaning that is not standard. For example, suppose you open 1♦, LHO overcalls 1♠ and partner doubles; standard these days is that double is negative (showing ♥'s) and may or may not be alerted or announced as such if you wish. If the double was showing the suit bid (i.e. penalties) then that should be alerted at this club as it is not 'standard' these days. (Almost) everything that applies to our club is written up in the 'Local Rules' section on our web site and my policy is very simple – alert bids that are not 'standard'. The ACBL rules are a total mess, keep changing, and are impossible to logically comprehend.

The 'local rules' apply at this club, and if in doubt – alert. I have, however, written up the current ACBL rules on Alerts which Guy was kind enough to provide me with. If you don't have access to a computer and want a copy of either then ask me.

Dealer: ♠ AJ5
East ♥ 752
Love all ♦ Q9542
♣ J8

About Balancing – part 1

Board 14 from Wednesday 3rd

♠ 86432	N	♠ 7	West	North(E)	East	South(G)
♥ 9863	W E	♥ KQ104	-	-	1♣	pass (1)
♦ K	S	♦ AJ8	pass	pass(2)	all pass	
♣ 763		♣ AQ942				
	♠ KQ109					
	♥ AJ					
	♦ 10763					
	♣ K105					

- (1) What did you bid with this South hand G in this week's quiz? South does not have quite enough for a 1NT overcall. It's the wrong shape for a double and has no 5 card suit for an overcall. So South has to pass and hope that partner understands balancing.
- (2) What did you bid with this North hand E in this week's quiz? If you had length in ♣'s then pass would be reasonable, but without ♣ length you should bid. Where are the points? Partner obviously has quite a few of them but was unable to bid because there was no suitable bid for him. So you have to 'protect' him and with this North hand 1♦ is clear. In the balancing (or protection) seat you do not need normal values for your bid. One common theme is 'borrow an ace from partner'.

And what happened? 1♣ made +2 for a clear top to E-W. Good results were obtained for N-S when they competed to 2♦ or 3♦.

About Balancing – part 2

Board 29 from Wednesday 3rd

Dealer: ♠ KQ64
North ♥ A87
Love all ♦ J4
♣ 9643

♠ 1072
♥ 1062
♦ A107
♣ KQ52

N
W E
S

♠ J9853
♥ KJ3
♦ 863
♣ J8

♠ A
♥ Q954
♦ KQ952
♣ A107

West	North	East	South(H)
-	pass	1♦	pass
1NT (1)	pass	pass (2)	2♠ (3)
pass	pass (4)	pass	

- (1) 1NT is the best bid here. 3 tens are worth a point but deduct a point for the flat shape.
- (2) I too would pass here. 2♥ would be a reverse and I would like a little bit more and a better ♥ suit. 2♦ would generally promise 6 ♦'s and leaving 1NT is best I think.
- (3) What did you bid with this South hand H in this week's quiz? This is again the balancing (pass-out seat) and although you have just 6 points it's best to bid. I was South at this table and I did not want to sell out to 1NT – so I bid 2♠.
- (4) North should not raise here – he knows that partner is bidding four of his points.

And what happened? 2♠ made exactly for a near top. At another table West was left to play in 1NT making +2 for a clear top their way.

The bottom lines: -

- Understand balancing. There have been whole books written on the subject. Basically, when you are in the pass-out seat and the bidding has died at a rather low level, then partner must have some points. So bid as if you had an ace more than you actually have. And partner should not raise as he knows that you have 'borrowed' 4 points from his hand.

About Balancing – part 3

Board 28 from Friday 5th

E-W scored a clear zero on this board, what went wrong?

Dealer:	♠ A653				
West	♥ Q4	West(K)	North	East(F)	South
N-S vul	♦ J4	pass	1♣	dbl (1)	1♦
	♣ KQ754	pass (2)	pass (3)	pass (4)	
♠ J8	N	♠ KQ92			
♥ J73	W E	♥ A10965			
♦ K53	S	♦ A102			
♣ J9832		♣ 10			
	♠ 1074				
	♥ K82				
	♦ Q9876				
	♣ A6				

- (1) What did you bid with this East hand F(a) in this week's quiz? The experts continue to debate whether to overcall the 5 carder or double when 5-4 or 4-5 in the majors. Either seems OK to me (but I generally prefer to overcall).
- (2) What did you bid with this West hand K in this week's quiz? Without the bid from South West would probably have to bid 1NT (6-9) but after South has bid he is now under no obligation to bid this ill-fitting heap. So my answer to K(b) is pass.
- (3) South's bid generally denies 9+ points (otherwise he would redouble) and his bid at the one level is considered forcing by most. I would bid 1♠ but pass worked out quite well ...
- (4) And what did you bid with this East hand F(b) in this week's quiz? It has worked out perfectly for him! His initial double promised a hand playable in ♦'s, ♥'s, or ♠'s. Now that South has bid ♦'s everything is absolutely fabulous as a simple 1♥ bid now promises 5 ♥'s and 4 ♠'s (double would show 4-4 in the majors). You should only pass 1♦ here with strength in ♦'s and this pass is simply pathetic.

And what happened? 1♦ went one down but scored a complete top for N-S as the bidding went higher at all the other tables. 2♥ by E-W would have been a good spot for E-W but all the N-S's competed further and all went for 200.

The bottom line: It is rarely correct to pass out one of a minor in the pass-out seat when you have 9 cards in the majors!

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: 2♥. The hand is far too good for a (pre-emptive) Michaels cue bid. And if you play that Michaels may be either weak or very strong this hand is nowhere near strong enough for 'very strong'. I do not like to double with this type of shape (you are fixed over a 2♣ response) and 2♥ looks clear to me.
- Hand B: 2NT (18-19). This is not denying a 4 card major as a 4-4 ♠ fit will subsequently be found. If partner actually has an extremely weak hand (such that he is going to pass 2NT) which has 4 ♠'s then he should have bid 1♠ in preference to 1♦. Note that 3NT is a very poor bid here as there may be a 4-4 ♠ fit.
- Hand C: (a) 3NT. Full speed ahead and dam the torpedoes.
(b) 3♥. But after an overcall it would be foolhardy to blast 3NT. You need a ♥ stop from partner – so bid 3♥ to ask if he has one.
- Hand D: (a) 2NT (or 3NT). The first priority after a 4th suit enquiry is to show a stop.
(b) 6♦. Partner is looking for slam and you have gone past 3NT. It is difficult to bid accurately now as you have denied a ♠ stop – so just bid slam.
- Hand E: 1♦. This is call balancing (bidding in the pass-out seat). Partner obviously has points but was unable to bid (usually because he has a flattish hand – so no 5 card suit – and not strong enough for 1NT and the wrong shape for double).
- Hand F: (a) Double or 1♥. The experts are continually debating which to do with 9 cards in the majors and I won't argue with either.
(b) 1♥. Now you can show your hand perfectly, 5 ♥'s and 4 ♠'s. Pass is a very poor option - you should only pass in this sort of position when you have ♦ strength.
- Hand G: Pass. Wrong shape for a double, cannot overcall with no 5 card suit, not enough points for 1NT. With these flattish hands that are worth an opener you often find that you have to pass if RHO opens. That is no problem if partner understands balancing.
- Hand H: 2♠. Don't pass and sell out so easily. This bidding has died far too low and partner has points.
- Hand J: 3♠. Partner's strength showing jump does not deny a 4 card major – so look for a possible 4-4 ♠ fit. Actually, this is not the very best solution – best is to play Checkback Stayman in this sequence – so 3♣ asks for majors exactly the same as if it were over a 2NT opening.
- Hand K: (a) 1NT – but only just. This is a miserable 6 count but bidding 1NT is better than bidding a 3 card suit.
(b) Pass. After RHO has bid you no longer have to. So a bid here would be a 'free bid' saying that you have something to say. With a 4 card major and about 6-9 points bid the major (you can have a point or two less with a 5 card major). But a free bid of 1NT here should really be a decent hand (say 8-9 points).