



**Palmerston North
Bridge Club
February 2009**

News and Views

We are at the start of a new bridge year, and several players have told me that they feel rusty after a summer layoff. All I can say is that they should have taken the opportunity to play some summer bridge. Actually, many members did exactly that, and there were up to fourteen tables on Tuesday evenings in December and January. Thanks to publicity by Teresa Thorne, we had players from other clubs joining in, too. Bridgers desperate for their Summer fix came from as far afield as Levin and even Wanganui. Many thanks to Bryan Northcott for directly during this period.

It seems a long way off now but the 2008 Christmas Cheer still lives on in our memories as a happy event. Other tournaments I had been to in the previous few weeks had been marred by lack of organization, but that was never an issue with Alister Stuck in charge. As I commented on the day, he managed things with a military precision and the smooth-running of the tournament added significantly to everyone's enjoyment.

Lorraine directed with her usual efficiency, coping serenely with some pretty erratic score-keeping by a few players. She also kept everyone to time which was a major feat with thirty nine tables to deal with. Liz Burrows provided an impressive array of prizes and Evelyn Hurley presented them with great good humour. Announcing so many prize winners could have been taxing for all concerned but she kept the atmosphere light and ensured the proceedings never dragged.

Talking of prizes, we must thank Margaret White and her donation of a number of prizes from Christies. Make sure next time you are in

the Plaza to pay Christies a visit. Jim Esson ran the raffle in his usual avuncular style, and remained unruffled (unraffled?) despite a number of glitches. The meal was delicious which hasn't always been the case at our Christmas Cheer. But with the Bristows in charge it was always going to be a feast worth waiting for.

Many other members contributed behind the scenes, from Bev Colville making sure everything went to plan, to Elsie Beale helping with the decorations; from Jan Whyte organizing the raffle to Tony Clear running the bar. The list goes on. But thanks to all for ensuring our Christmas Cheer remains one of the highlights of the North Island bridge calendar.

Each of the top three positions in the tournament was occupied by a local player paired with a member of another club. Bob Hurley won, playing with Deb Smith. Evelyn Hurley came second with Scott Smith, a former member of our club, now based in Auckland. Wayne Burrows playing with another outsider Colin Carryer was third.

We were disappointed that our requests for funds to construct a fence and electronic gate was turned down by the Lotteries Grants Board but we are currently exploring alternative sources. In the meantime, we will continue to pay for a student to patrol the grounds during our three regular evenings of bridge.

Lastly, with the AGM being held soon (27th March), members should be thinking of putting themselves forward to serve on the committee. Several current members of the committee are retiring and we would welcome support from other players. To paraphrase JFK's speechwriter, Ted Sorenson, "ask not what my bridge club can do for me, but what can I do for my bridge club ." The call for nominations will be pinned on the notice board soon.

Ray Kemp

Gizmo Magic

I have mentioned before some of the gadgets that partnerships employ to try to steal a march in the bidding: from multi-twos to key card Blackwood, from Namyats to Tartan Twos. There is often a satisfaction in making such bids even if they make very little difference in the end to the final contract. On the downside, I guess most of us have had the experience of using a conventional bid that our partner misunderstands or (worse) they recall as having a special meaning but cannot quite remember what it is.

An increasingly popular device is Lebensohl. It is not so much a specific bid as a framework that can be used in competitive situations. Ron Anderson has written a little book called "The Lebensohl Convention Complete" that supplies rather more information about it than most people would ever want to know.

In its most common form, Lebensohl is used for dealing with the situation when your right hand opponent insists on overcalling partner's one no trump opener. This happens more and more nowadays, particularly over a weak no trump. With no interference we can use Stayman, transfers, range finders or forcing bids but once someone has intervened it makes things quite tricky (which is why opponents do it, of course.)

Once our right hand opponent has overcalled our partner's no trump there are many options we may wish to consider. These include competing for the part score, punishing the opponent's temerity, looking for a major suit fit, inviting to game, forcing to game, or checking whether partner has a stop in the overcaller's suit. There are so many questions and so few bids available. Lebensohl won't solve all your problems but it can help considerably and there are a number of websites that give the essentials of the convention including Wikipedia.

One of the fundamental principles of Lebensohl is incorporated into the two cute acronyms SASS and FADS. If you have a stop in the opponent's overcall suit then you can

probably afford to take your time in bidding upwards. If the opponents insist on competing then you can punish them. This is the notion of Slow Arrival Shows Stopper. Conversely, if you don't have a stop in the opponent's suit then you want to bid up quickly to stop the enemy finding a fit. This is the idea of Fast Arrival Denies Stopper. The whole scheme takes some absorbing, particularly if opponents use artificial overcalls such as Sharples or Cappelletti and it is not recommended for casual partnerships.

In the afternoon of the Christmas Cheer, we had the opportunity to use one of the specialized bids in the Lebensohl scheme and it helped us get to a contract that most other couples failed to reach.

As East, vulnerable against non-vulnerable opponents I picked up the following collection:

♠ KT8
♥ 53
♦ K975
♣ AK52

The bidding began as follows:

South	West	North	East
			1NT
	2H	3H	

If North had enquired about the 3H bid, I would have been able to inform her that it showed a game-going hand with exactly four spades and no stop in hearts. One of the bonuses of employing unusual conventions is to experience the admiration of the opponents when you explain it to them. "Gosh. You can tell all that by one bid?" So it was disappointing that she didn't ask. After North passed, I was in a quandary. Three no trumps was out of the question and a minor suit game is never very appealing in pairs, so I opted for three spades which partner raised to four. Four-three fits in a major aren't necessarily easy to play, but it seemed the best alternative. The four hands are shown overleaf.

<p>♠ QJ93 ♥ 7 ♦ AQ8432 ♣ Q6</p>	<p>♠ 654 ♥ JT82 ♦ J ♣ T9843</p>
<p>♠ A72 ♥ AKQ964 ♦ T6 ♣ J7</p>	<p>♠ KT8 ♥ 53 ♦ K975 ♣ AK52</p>

Looking at dummy after the ace of hearts lead, I realized that five diamonds would have been a safer spot, but we would get more points for the spade game – as long as it made. The main problem is that after a heart continuation, if I ruffed in dummy, then I would be in trouble if the spades split four-two. It seemed to me that the best strategy, if South continued with a second heart, would be to throw away a diamond from dummy. It would give away the chance of an overtrick but would allow me to preserve my four trumps in that hand.

Lady Luck came to my rescue as it happened and I didn't have to make the choice. On her partner's opening heart lead, North discarded the ten of clubs. She then apologized and substituted a heart, explaining that she had picked out the wrong card. The director was duly summoned and I gratefully accepted the option that I could require a club lead from South at trick two. After that, there were no problems.

As you can see, the spades split three-three and so I needn't have worried about trumps. As a final twist, as the cards lie, the "safety play" of throwing away a diamond on a heart continuation at trick two provided the opponents with an opportunity to defeat what would otherwise be a solid contract. At trick three, South just needed to switch to a diamond, and then give North a ruff in the suit when coming in with the ace of spades.

Out of the 39 EW couples in the Christmas Cheer only two others got to four spades. Many were in five diamonds making eleven tricks.

One fortunate couple were doubled in this contract. A few brave souls went down in a hopeless three no trumps. Others doubled a hearts sacrifice at the three or four level by NS, earning 100 or 300 – no recompense for a missed vulnerable game. So three cheers for Lebensohl. Was I lucky that North played the wrong card? Yes. Was I lucky that trumps split 3-3? Perhaps. Still, I prefer to believe that our good result was due to our special gizmo.

Ray Kemp

Only Connect

This famous EM Forster quote not only applies to human relations but also to the playing of bridge hands. Declarer will sometimes duck a trick in a suit, just to maintain communications open with a dummy that is short of outside entries. The same is true of the defence. Occasionally, a defender may refuse a trick which they could win, just to keep in touch with partner.

An interesting case of this occurred during Summer bridge. I was defending against a 3NT contract and had to duck not once but twice in order to ensure we collected our tricks. Here are the hands:

<p>♠ QJ5 ♥ QJ9 ♦ A93 ♣ J743</p>	<p>♠ 9 ♥ AKT6 ♦ KJT52 ♣ Q65</p>
<p>♠ KT2 ♥ 543 ♦ Q6 ♣ AKT92</p>	<p>♠ A87643 ♥ 872 ♦ 874 ♣ 8</p>

Dealer: West
Vul: None

The bidding proceeded as follows:

South	West	North	East
	Pass	1D	2S
3NT	All Pass		

I was sitting East and am not particularly proud of the weak jump overcall in spades, but it seemed fairly safe. Partner had passed so North-South almost certainly had game on somewhere. My intervention would hopefully make their task harder and give partner a suit to lead if South got to play the contract. As you can see, South's leap to three no trumps put an end to the auction.

West led the queen of spades. Looking at dummy, I inferred that partner had some more points somewhere. South is an astute player and would not have given away the chance of a slam if he had a big hand. Partner looked to have about ten points and almost certainly had an outside entry.

It may seem tempting to overtake the queen with my ace to drive out South's king, but that would have been a mistake. If the queen was singleton then South would be laughing. Even if it was a doubleton we would probably be skewered, but if partner had three spades then I needed to keep the channels open for when West took a trick in another suit, so I ducked. South followed with a low spade.

My partner then led the jack of spades. This was good news, but I still could not afford to take the trick. This time South had to come in with his king. He now looked to have eight top tricks and had to find a ninth before we got in again. He immediately played a low diamond from hand, hoping that West had the ace and would duck first time round. No chance. West was wide awake, took the trick and led her third spade. At last, I got in with my ace and took the next four tricks.

To compound South's misery, it was clear in the post mortem that he could have always made ten tricks by playing on the heart suit instead of trying to steal a diamond trick.

Ray Kemp

Postscript (What the Deuce - Two)

If you remember, you were challenged in the last newsletter to construct a bridge hand in which each of the deuces wins a trick. Several readers expressed an interest in the puzzle but there was only one proposed solution submitted. Unfortunately, this solution was flawed so the prize of a free night's bridge is still up for grabs.

Just to give you some assistance, here is a proof that, in a no trump contract, unless each player holds a deuce the four deuces cannot each win a trick. The proof proceeds as follows:

Suppose one of the players does not hold a deuce (let's call him Eustace.) In a no trump contract, for the deuce to win a trick it must be led by the player who holds it and, at the same time, none of the other players can have a card of that suit. Consider the unfortunate Eustace. When the first deuce is led by one of the other players, (the two of clubs, say) Eustace will not have a club left. When the second deuce is led (the two of diamonds, say), Eustace cannot have a diamond left. When the third deuce is led (the two of hearts, say) then Eustace cannot have a heart left. Lastly, when the fourth deuce is led (the two of spades, say) Eustace cannot have a spade left. At this point, since Eustace doesn't have a spade he must have a card of one of the other suits. But we have already decided that he doesn't. Thus we get a contradiction.

The perceptive among you will have worked out that, although we have shown that no player can have more than one deuce, we have not proved that, even if each player has exactly one deuce, we can construct a no trump contract.

This is your challenge. Can you produce a hand that will prove it *is* possible?

It can also be shown that, even if a no trump contract can be constructed in which each deuce wins a trick, it cannot be higher than 3NT (easy), and that it is impossible in a suit contract for each of the four deuces to win a trick (harder.) Over to you.

Ray Kemp