



## Palmerston North Bridge Club February 2011

### Editorial

Welcome back to everyone for 2011.

Especially welcome back to columnist Ray Kemp. Ray has written more newsletter articles than most, and it is good to see that he has been using the summer productively.

Are most of your finesses going to work this year? No one knows, of course, but best wishes to all bridge players as they find out what the new year has in store.

Ross Quayle

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### Rating Points

The latest rating points are posted on the notice board. Ratings points are a special variant of masterpoints. They are intended to show one's latest form – so last year's points count the most, and older points count less. Any points over ten years old do not contribute at all.

The calculation is complex and most people do not bother to calculate their own. If you do, be aware that your total may be higher than expected. This is because of various input errors and omissions in previous years, now corrected. Details are on the board.

### Club Grading

The new club grades will be available shortly. Grading is determined by the grading sub-committee and are based on master points, rating points, previous performance and club results.

The club has three graded playing sessions, on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings, but a total of seven grades. This tries to meet several overlapping objectives, which include: recognition for performance; fair competitions between players of comparable skill; reasonably even numbers on playing nights; and meeting personal preferences for playing night. The levels also need to correlate with individuals' eligibility for Junior and Intermediate tournaments.

The grades are:

- Senior
- Senior Reserve
- Senior Reserve \*
- Intermediate
- Intermediate \*
- Junior
- Novice

The \* (called "stars") allow that person to play down a grade if they wish. They are eligible to win monthly events, pairs championship and teams events, but are not eligible for the (individual) points cup in that lower grade.

The structure means that each playing night contains three target grades. These are:

Monday:

- Intermediate \*
- Junior
- Novice

Tuesday:

- Senior
- Senior Reserve
- Senior Reserve \*

Thursday:

- Senior Reserve \*
- Intermediate
- Intermediate \*

Note also that Tuesday is an open grade and anyone can play there if they wish.

Mixed partnerships are also allowed to play. A senior may play with a junior, or a senior reserve may play with an intermediate\* or a junior, in intermediate grade; but such pairings are not allowed to win competitions.

### A Christmas Present

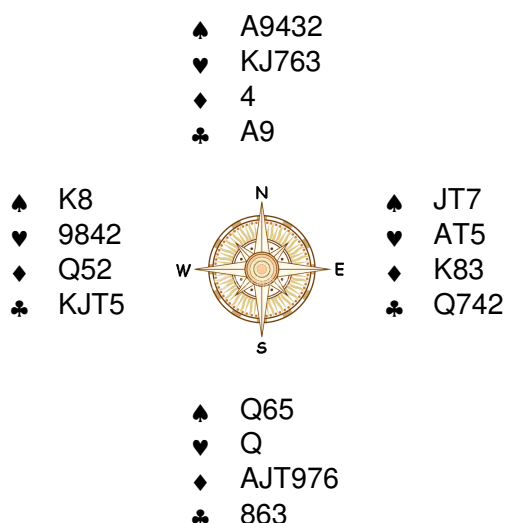
One of the absorbing features of bridge is how it requires so many different skills, from statistics to memory, from inference to psychology, and it is not always clear which you should apply in any particular situation. So, you have to be an opportunist too.

For example, everyone knows at least a little about how to play suit combinations. This is based on statistics, and on memory – experts can memorize dozens of combinations and use them when appropriate.

Here is one combination that came up in Summer Bridge:

A9432    opposite    Q65

With no other information on the bidding or play the normal strategy to make four tricks would be to play off the ace and then up to the queen. It works if East has Kx or Kxx, a somewhat less than fifty percent chance. Another alternative is to hope West has Kx (even less likely) in which case playing off the ace and then low from both hands brings home the bacon.



These long odds make bridge players nervous, so how can they be improved? The answer is to get the opponents to lead the suit. It is never better to lead a suit oneself than to let the opponents lead it. It gives you so many extra options. Unfortunately, when this occurred on a Tuesday before Christmas, the suit in question was spades, the trump suit, and, usually, declarer's first task is to get the kids off the street. I was North declaring in four spades. The four hands are as shown.

How things are going to pan out is unclear, but it really would be helpful if I could avoid two trump losers, even better if I can get the opponents to lead the suit.

Enter the Christmas fairy. East leads the jack of spades to the contract. Now, I have nothing against players leading trumps to contracts, particularly if they are opponents, but it often does simplify matters for declarer. In this case, it makes it easier for me to work out the probable trump situation. I infer that East does not have the king of spades unless she is very clever or very foolish, so my best hope is that she has three trumps, leaving West with Kx. So I play low from dummy and take the ace of spades in hand. I want to take out trumps soon but first I want to set up hearts to get rid of that nasty club loser. So I lead a low heart from hand.

Often, when an opponent has led trumps to the contract they need no encouragement to continue doing so if they get back in. Maybe they just want to convince declarer and partner that it wasn't an aberration first time around. Sure enough, East wins with the ace of hearts and immediately leads another trump. I cross my fingers and play low from dummy. Fortunately, West's king drops and the rest is easy.

Ray Kemp

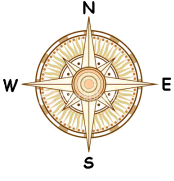
### A hand for Corporal Jones

You remember Corporal Jones from Dad's Army? He had a favourite catch phrase, very applicable to bridge. When danger threatened Corporal Jones would shout 'Don't Panic!', generally while running around like a headless chicken. This is the theme of my story. Mind you, I remember he had another favourite phrase too. This was "They don't like it up 'em", "they" being the fuzzy-wuzzies and "it" being the cold steel of the bayonet. Well they wouldn't, would they? Maybe this phrase is applicable to bridge as well, but I will have to think more about that.

On Tuesday last I was North and ended up as declarer on the following hand:

After his partner opens 1NT South has to decide whether to transfer to hearts and rebid spades, which is generally played as game forcing; or to use Stayman and jump, but surely most Norths will choose 3NT if partner offers the chance.

The lead was the five of diamonds. I threw a heart from dummy, West played the eight and I took it with the Ace.

♠ J105		
♥ 107		
♦ AKQJ7		
♣ J97		
		
♠ 976		♠ A83
♥ 9843		♥ AJ
♦ 83		♦ 1096542
♣ KQ52		♣ 103
♠ KQ42		
♥ KQ652		
♦ A864		

Now a review of our assets is very encouraging. Both the diamonds and spades are my sort of suit, and I am confidently counting seven tricks there, once the Ace of spades is forced out, with the possibility of another in diamonds if the break is 4-4. (Note also that this is not very likely – less likely than a 3-3 break when six cards are missing).

I also have the Ace of clubs, which makes eight tricks; and any fool should be able to get a trick out of KQ of hearts. So I will be very disappointed to go down in this contract. Surely there is no need to panic?

On the negative side, the lead probably implies the diamonds are not breaking; and note that on every round of diamonds I have to discard from dummy, but, I want to keep everything! Spades are good but are my best source of communication between the hands, so for that reason it might be nice to hang on to them. In fact, when they are gone I might be cut off from my diamond tricks. That would not be enjoyable. The clubs and hearts both have holes in them but neither suit is wide open – in fact, contrast my holding of KQ10 and AJ9 respectively with the defence's AJ9 and KQ10, and one can see that any problem I have got they have also got, if you see what I mean. I really have no idea where any of the relevant honour cards are placed.

The big decision is about what suit to attack first. Spades is tempting, because any other suit seems to have more risks. Diamonds can set up tricks for the defence, and makes me discard

prematurely. Hearts and clubs also are likely to set up tricks for the defence, and I would much rather have the defence lead them to me.

The other tempting option is a heart, but this seems to be staking nearly everything on the Ace being onside. If it is, then sure I have no further problem. If it is not, and the ten of hearts is covered by the Jack, then I have only one heart stop and I could have lost it while the Ace of spades is still out. Don't Panic!

So I lead the Jack of spades. East pauses and then ducks, so maybe has the Ace. I then lead the ten of spades – the moment of truth is getting closer. I have already decided to play a third spade if this is ducked, and defy the defence to never again lead a diamond. If they can pick my hand exactly then good luck to them I say. Belatedly I realise it would have been better to lead a small spade, keeping the ten in hand in case the ace appears. And it did, East returning the ten of diamonds and I took the King.

Now if I still had that ten of spades in my hand, I could lead a heart and make sure of my contract, because I am starting to realise that this counts as a tricky hand. However, too late for that now. I am possibly in hand for the last time, but cashing up leaves me with only eight tricks and only an outside chance of a heart trick because the defence will have both clubs and diamonds to cash.

I decide that another diamond will only help the defence work out what is going on. It really is time to lead a heart and make sure of at least one trick there; but no, I have gone to some length to avoid leading hearts so I must never, ever lead a heart! Don't Panic! I lead a spade to dummy and another spade, making everybody discard. West threw a club and I and East both threw a diamond.

Now comes another moment of truth. I now have to open up either hearts or clubs because I am in dummy and dummy holds only those suits. I lead a small club away from the Ace. Now if West is very bold and ducks smoothly I will surely try the nine and lose to the ten, however that is a hard risk to take. Instead, West wins the Queen and leads a heart. Hooray! The king and queen are finally looking good. East is in with the Ace and should put me back on table with a club or heart and I will have another club to lose – but making



my contract. In practice East got it wrong, perfectly understandable on this hand, and lead a diamond which let me pitch the loser from dummy, and make four.

My conclusion is that it is indeed a tricky hand. I misplayed it in a couple of ways but was lucky enough in the end to get through. Several other declarers went down in 3NT. Did they do what I did but misguess the clubs? One thing is for sure, they did not lead a heart at trick two. I suspect that most saw the entry danger, it triggered a Corporal Jones episode and they ran the diamonds in hope.

If anyone who played the hand wishes to tell me (in total confidence of course) what happened at their table I would be most interested.

For what it is worth, after all this reflection I believe that the best line is a heart at trick two. If the King loses to the Ace, then the defence can continue to attack their best suit, be it either hearts or clubs; but declarer will still have first round control of the other suit, and it is far from likely that they can set up the necessary three extra tricks to beat the contract with only six cards in the suit. Holding the jack and ten of spades guarantees one entry back to hand for the diamond tricks.

Ross Quayle

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