



## News and Views

The Palmerston North Open was held at our club rooms at the end of April. The numbers were pretty low just a couple of days before entries closed, but a late flurry brought us up to thirty two pairs. Players came in from as far away as Wellington, New Plymouth and Hawkes Bay, as well as a good contingent from our home club.

Lorraine Stachurski did much of the advertising, collecting entries, and general preparation. Gayle Leader mobilised the catering, in addition to putting in a lot of time herself. Elsie Beale did a great job getting sponsors. It would be invidious to try to list everyone else who helped because I might miss someone out, but thanks to all those who rallied round to make it a successful tournament.

Amongst the leading pairs in the competition itself were a sprinkling of local players. John Lenart came third, with Jan Whyte and Ken Bateman close behind. In only their second Open tournament, Shirley Barnett and Julie Bunnell came a very creditable tenth equal.

Winners at other recent tournaments include Carolyn Brodie and John Ayers at the Hawera Junior Tournament, Sean Lynch and John Hogan at the Caccia Birch Intermediate Tournament, and Liz Burrows at the Dannevirke Open.

We were just pipped at the post in the regional match against New Plymouth earlier this month, but all the teams put up a good performance. Thanks are due to Martin Carryer for organizing the team.

On 7th June we will be hosting a one day bridge seminar to be given by Tina McVeigh. She is a well-known grandmaster and bridge teacher from Christchurch and was co-founder of the very successful "House of Cards." You can find out more about her and her company at [www.houseofcards.co.nz](http://www.houseofcards.co.nz). The 2 sessions will be from 10am to 12.30 then 1.30 to 4pm. The morning session will cover modern Acol, and the afternoon will cover doubles. If you want to know what advances are taking place in Acol, and occasionally have misunderstandings with

partner on what is a take-out and what is a penalty double then this is for you. The sessions will be punctuated with play hands, quizzes, and on-screen displays. The cost will be \$50 per session or \$90 per person for the day. More details can be found in a flyer on the club notice board.

According to Alister, who helped facilitate the seminar, many junior, intermediate, senior reserve and day-time bridge players would benefit from these lessons.

The novices have been familiarizing themselves with the mysteries of the Mitchell movement this month, in addition to all the other strange rituals we carry out at bridge sessions that have little or nothing to do with the actual play.

Next month, we would like to give them practice playing in the Junior Room and will be asking for volunteers to play with a novice on Monday evenings for the month of June. We will be taking names during the other sessions so please make yourself available if possible. Volunteers will not have to pay for their evening's bridge and will have the satisfaction of helping someone on the first rung of the bridge ladder.

Ray Kemp

## Phantastic

When Wayne introduced pre-emptive bidding to the novice players, he noted that the longest suit he had ever picked up in a hand contained eleven cards. The likelihood of this is about one in three million, so it sounds as if the hand generator in use was dubious unless Wayne was extremely lucky. At the club, the longest suit I have seen is a nine-carder and one of these occurred in April during the Tuesday night pairs. The hand is reproduced below.

S AQJT65432  
H 8  
D -  
C A74

After checking the date to make sure it is not April fools day, your next task is to evaluate the hand. If you just use the high card point count then it doesn't fare very well. There are only 11 HCPs. However, a more realistic assessment is to count the hand's trick making potential. Even without any help from partner you can be almost certain of nine tricks, so you must either bid game yourself or force your partner to respond.

North held this blockbuster and was the dealer, non-vulnerable against vulnerable opponents. It is tempting to open four spades but this bid is usually reserved for weak hands where the main aim is to pre-empt. With this hand, if your partner has any decent cards at all then you could easily make a small, or even grand slam.

Some partnerships use a scheme called NAMYATS (to discover its inventor hold this page up to the mirror) where a four diamonds opener shows a strong spade suit with slam potential. Partner can then cue bid, ask more about the opener's cards or sign off in four spades if they are really weak.

An alternative gadget is the Acol four no trump opener. It may have been developed by Acol players but could be adopted by most partnerships. If your partner opens four no trumps then you are requested to respond by bidding a suit in which you have an ace. A response of five clubs shows no ace, six clubs shows the ace of clubs and five no trumps indicates two aces.

Neither of these conventions tell partner whether you have the all-important king of spades, so another approach is to start with your forcing bids (two clubs in Acol, for example), jump to show you want to play in spades and then use Roman Key Card Blackwood. We've talked about this convention before, and a number of players at the club seem to have adopted it. In RKC Blackwood, a bid of four no trumps is an inquiry not just for the aces but for the king of the agreed trump suit as well, so there are five 'key cards.'

As any of you who played this hand will know, all of North's worries about what to open were pretty irrelevant, since most Wests leapt in with a bid of six diamonds or six hearts.

So now it's back to North. Assuming your partner has shown nothing at all do you pass, bid on or double the opponents' slam? Certainly, if you believe in the saying 'never compete at the five level' then you will definitely not compete at the six level. However, as you can see from all the hands shown in the next column, in this case bidding six spades is the best thing you can do.

S AQJT65432  
H 8  
D -  
C A74

S 9  
H AKQ73  
D AKQJT96  
C -

S K7  
H J42  
D 754  
C JT962

S 8  
H T965  
D 832  
C KQ853

If North thought their cards were good, then West must have been delirious with a hand containing an almost certain twelve tricks. Six spades goes two light at the most, and, even doubled, is a good sacrifice against West's certain vulnerable slam.

Looking at the score sheet afterwards, there were a range of results, including, incredibly, a couple of spade contracts making. The highest score was six hearts redoubled for a score of 2070. West was lucky. The redouble gained one matchpoint whereas if North had taken the hint and sacrificed in six spades, EW would have got a near bottom board.

So what happened at our table? Well, after suffering dreary cards for most of the evening sitting East-West, my partner and I were actually phantom for this exciting deal.

**Ray Kemp**

### **Postscript (don't try this at the club)**

John Crawford, a legendary American bridge player, was playing with a weaker partner in a high stakes game. His partner led the king of spades (king from ace-king) and John had the S 1098. He realized that if he played the eight his partner would think it was an encouraging card and continue the suit which John knew would be awful. Instead, as he went to play the eight, he deliberately dropped it under the table and spent a long time trying to pick it up. Finally his partner asked him what it was. John replied: "Oh nothing, just a low spade."