



News and Views

As many of you will already know, Wayne Burrows has been selected to play for the New Zealand Open Bridge Team competing in Macau next month. I'm sure we all wish him well.

New Zealand International players have to pay most of their expenses, so we are trying to raise money at the club to support Wayne. Besides a weekly raffle, we are organizing an event for the evening of Friday, 12th June. It will probably consist of an introduction by Wayne to Bridge Base Online, followed by a bridge session where each player plays with a different partner in each round. It should be great fun, and an opportunity for players from different grades to get to know one another. So mark that date in your diary.

Also, of course, you will already have kept Saturday 6th June free to take part in our Charity Tournament. This year the worthy cause is the Stewart Centre Trust which helps with rehabilitation of victims of brain injuries. A box is available in the clubrooms for prize contributions.

Thanks to everyone who helped out at the Centre Island Pairs. It was a two day 15A point tournament, attracting some of the country's top players. Local players didn't register at the top of the main leader board, but congratulations to Martin Carryer and Ross Quayle who won the consolation event.

At the last committee meeting it was decided to permit 'regular visitors' to play at the club without having to join. These are typically 'out-of-towners' who might only wish to play a couple of months a year. They are to be charged a \$2 premium since they do not have to pay a subscription. So rates for these players will be \$6 if paying on a card and \$7 for cash. This does not affect casual visitors (for example, occasional drop-ins from other clubs or from abroad.) These visitors can pay our normal member rates for up to a month.

Ray Kemp

Greek Gifts

I guess most readers will be familiar with the expression 'Greek gift', presumably arising from the story of the Greek army leaving a wooden horse on the beach for the good people of Troy. As we know, that all ended in tears, so the moral is, you should be careful about accepting favours from strangers.

This can also be true at the bridge table, as I learned to my cost during one hand at the Dannevirke Open earlier this month. By accepting an apparent free gift from declarer I turned a potential top board into a total zero.

As West, neither side vulnerable, I picked up the following uninspiring collection:

♠ 654
♥ J842
♦ K942
♣ JT

The bidding was brief and to the point:

South	West	North	East
	Pass	1C	Pass
1D	Pass	1S	Pass
6NT	All Pass		

NS were playing 'preferred minor' so the club opener showed at least a three card suit. Presumably, South had a fistful of points and no major suit fit and was just going for broke. Assuming they had about 34 points between them (the normal requirement for six no trumps) I inferred my partner had close to nothing. For this reason, caution seemed to be called for, particularly when leading into a strong no trump hand. Consequently, I decided on a passive lead, the six of spades, hoping my partner would realize it was 'top of nothing.'

♠ KT83
♥ AQT
♦ Q63
♣ K93

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♥ AQT
♦ Q63
♣ K93

♠ 654
♥ J842
♦ K942
♣ JT

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♥ J842
♦ K942
♣ JT

♠ J972
♥ 763
♦ T7
♣ Q762

♠ AQ
♥ K95
♦ AJ85
♣ A854

Declarer gazed at dummy for a considerable time. It obviously wasn't quite what he wanted. An excellent tip from S J Simon, one of the inventors of Acol, is that the defenders should take a good look at dummy during this time and work out what they are going to play in different circumstances. For me, that appeared easy. I didn't have much choice with the black suits. If hearts were led from hand, I just had to play low. With diamonds, I just had to wait for the inevitable finesse into declarer's hand to take my king. Hopefully, partner had one or two honours so we should take two or three tricks.

Eventually, declarer played the ten of spades from dummy. Partner inserted the jack, and declarer contributed the ace.

An alternative title for this article could be 'always expect the unexpected' and I should have heeded this advice. Declarer caught me on the hop by immediately playing the five of diamonds from his hand. In a three no trump contract, I would automatically duck since it is usually bad form for high cards to take air. However, in the slam, there seemed to be no reason not to accept the gift so I won with the king. We only needed two tricks after all.

Continuing with spades seemed to be harmless enough (with a little luck partner had started with the queen-jack and we could take this contract down in double quick time.

To cut a long story short, it was declarer who turned up with the queen of spades. The four hands can be seen at the top of the next column.

He played off three top hearts, and three diamond winners, discarding a low club from dummy on his fourth diamond. Rather worryingly, my partner appeared to be struggling with her discards. She only had two diamonds so had to find two cards to jettison. She decided to throw two clubs, at which point declarer led up to the king of clubs in dummy. Cashing the king of spades, he returned to his hand with the ace of clubs and, by consummate skill or great good fortune claimed trick thirteen with the last remaining club (the eight).

Two points are of note. Firstly, if I duck the diamond, declarer can only win two diamond tricks, and secondly, because I didn't, East was fatally squeezed when the fourth diamond was led. She discarded a second club which gave South the contract, but discarding a spade would have led to the same result, only this time, declarer would have made a fourth spade trick to go with his eight tricks from the other suits.

As you can imagine no other pair was in the contract, let alone making it. So remember, always be suspicious when the opponents appear to be giving you a free trick. You may end up, like the Trojans, going from hero to zero.

Ray Kemp

Alerts

Some club members seem confused about what should and what should not be alerted when their partner bids. In 2006, the rules in New Zealand were simplified to try to reduce the need for alerts.

If nearly everyone uses a particular bid in a conventional way (ie not necessarily showing the suit bid) then there seems little point in alerting it. So, for example, since most players use an opening two clubs to show a very strong hand, and a two clubs response to a one no trump opener as Stayman, then there should be no need to circle these bids.

For the most part, only unusual bids and uncommon conventions now have to be alerted. Potentially conventional bids that should *not* now be alerted include:

- Any doubles or redoubles
- Any bid of an opponent's suit (for example, Michael's cue bids)
- A game force opener of two clubs and the two diamonds (negative) response
- Any bid at the four level or above.
- Simple Stayman and the two diamond response
- Preferred minor opener of one club or one diamond that contains three or more cards

In addition, any no trump opener showing a balanced hand should not be alerted, as long as it is in the normal expected ranges (eg 12-14, 15-17).

For most club players using Acol or Standard American this leaves only a few bids that must be alerted including:

- Short club openers which may contain two or fewer cards
- Bids requiring partner to transfer to another suit
- Two-level openers (apart from the strong two clubs) that do not show the suit bid or that show more than one suit (multi two diamonds, for example, and the unusual two no trump)
- Fourth suit forcing.

Also, if you add any other conventional bids to your system, then they, too, must be alerted.

Because most bids do not get alerted, you should tell your opponents what your basic system is. In theory, you should have a pre-alert card to show your opponents, indicating your basic system, your no trump range and any special unusual bids. This does not always happen, even in tournaments, and rarely on club nights. More informally, at the start of a round (after a friendly greeting to your opponents, of course) you should tell them what your basic system is (for example: "Standard American with 15-17 no trump.")

Although the streamlining of the alert rules makes auctions less ringbound, you should be on your guard to ask about any bid that might be conventional but is not alerted. Don't assume it is 'obvious' just because it is not circled.

For example, your right hand opponent's double of partner's one no trump opener might show anything at all. It could be a strength bid, or it could show both majors. Who knows? Well, presumably the partner of the doubler knows, and it might be worth your while asking him. Also, if an opponent makes a strange bid at the four level you are entitled to know what it means (although you might defer your question until the end of the auction, unless you are thinking of bidding.)

When the opponents ask for an explanation of your bid, whether it is alerted or not, it is important that you give a full description. For example, saying "Michael's" or "Unusual no trump" isn't sufficient. You should give the points range and the possible length of suits. Just saying "standard" may not be adequate. If they get an answer which they believe is imprecise then they may be entitled to further information.

It is easy to be misled by bids, even when they are alerted. Don't get caught out as my partner and I were in a recent tournament when an opponent opened two hearts. This was circled and we were told it showed a 'weak two-suiter'. It was, it later transpired, the following miserable collection:

♠	T865
♥	J9743
♦	J9
♣	93

Weak, indeed!

Ray Kemp

Book Review

The blurb of *The Principles of Card Play* by Paul Marston claims that the book "... explains the elements of card play at bridge one step at a time. The writing is clear making it easy to follow. It is ideal for any beginner or intermediate player who wants to play the cards well." I totally agree with this comment and would recommend the book to any one who has recently completed Wayne Burrow's lessons.

It is divided into 3 sections – play in no trumps, play in a suit contract and lastly defence. The first 2 sections should help you to find out where to get those extra tricks you need once you have bid a contract and counted your definite winners or losers. It covers topics like discarding losers, setting up side suits and the danger hand. The last section looks at the opening lead, third and second hand play and discards. Each chapter has exercises with answers for you work through and repeat if you don't get them all correct first time.

I found the best way to read this book was to work through a chapter by dealing out the hands and then deciding how to play them. In summary – a highly readable book which I recommend to you if you have not been playing long or want to improve your results. If you are interested, check out the copy in our club library.

Andrew Brodie

Postscript – A Bad Break?

Question 1: What is the worst trump break you have suffered when playing in a suit contract at the four level: 5-0? 6-0?

Question 2: Vulnerable against non-vulnerable opponents you pick up the following hand:

♠ QT643
♥ 8
♦ Q
♣ Q96543

Despite my constant advice to avoid such conventions you write down 2S on the bidding pad, showing a weak hand with five spades and at least five cards in another suit. Your left hand opponent passes and partner jumps to four diamonds. The next hand passes. What do you do now?

You are in unknown territory. If you had opened one spade then a response of four diamonds would be a 'splinter', agreeing spades, showing a singleton or void in diamonds and suggesting a slam. But you have no such agreement after a two spade opener. In view of your own hand, the likelihood that partner is short in diamonds appears remote so you assume she has a strong diamond holding and is inviting you to bid game in that suit. Since you are a bare minimum, you pass and left hand opponent does likewise.

South now has the challenging task of making ten tricks with a 1-1 fit in diamonds. Here are the four hands:

♠ QT643
♥ 8
♦ Q
♣ Q96543

♠ 97
♥ QJT6
♦ JT7642
♣ A

♠ 8
♥ 9432
♦ AK985
♣ T87

♠ AKJ52
♥ AK75
♦ 3
♣ KJ2

This deal was played on a Tuesday evening this month and declarer had to cope with a 6-5 trump split in diamonds. In one sense, it could be regarded as a bad trump break, but, it surely could have been worse: 7-4? 8-3?

Ray Kemp