

OVERTRICKS MATTER

We find that very often people get to game and are happy to just make their contract. Often, they are missing an opportunity to make an extra trick or two. Don't be satisfied with just fulfilling your contract if you can look for a way to make overtricks without jeopardizing your contract.

This is the commonest reason for a bad result on a board. Most of the room is in 4S making 5. You are in 4S making 4. You get a bottom board. As declarer, stop at trick one and analyze the hand. If it looks like it is a piece of cake to make your contract, stop and see what line of play will allow you to potentially make one or two overtricks. TIP: Look for 10's and 9's and see how they may help you. See how you can try to best get your unsupported King to win a trick. Don't be satisfied with mediocrity!

HAND ANALYSIS

In this day and age, we have something that is to our great advantage for improving our game; something we never had in the olden days. Twenty years ago, William Bailey (an American) developed a programme called "Deep Finesse". This programme analyzes each hand as to the number of tricks that can be taken by either side in all types of contracts (NT, S, H, D or C). The hand record printouts give this information, thanks to this programme.



We now have a great tool to help us with our bidding, play and defence.

e.g. we played the hand in 3C and we look at the analysis which says we can make 3NT; now we can scrutinize the hand to see if bidding this was possible.

e.g. You scored + 200 for being in 3S making 5 and you got a bottom board; you can now look to see how you might have bid game on this hand, since everybody else reached game and made it.

NOTE: The hand record may say that you can make 6NT but that does not necessarily mean that you could have bid it. **BUT** it is an enormous convenience to be able to quickly look at this record and see why you received a poor result on several hands.

Sometimes it may not be your fault. You were simply "fixed" either because your opponents made a lucky guess on bidding or defence or play but for the most part, you can learn by using this great tool. In the 70's and 80's, we only had hand records for a very special event or at a tournament and there was no double dummy analysis (this is what it is called when you can see all four hands). Now it is an everyday occurrence to have these records.

We urge you to

1. Keep a private score
2. Get a SUMMARY at the end of each game
3. Pick the 3 worst scores you received
4. Take the time to find out why you did so poorly on those 3 hands.

If you do this while still at the bridge club, there is always someone there who can give you some advice. Just show them the hand record and tell them the board number. Best of all, make a note at the time you play this hand as to how the bidding went and what was led. An expert cannot help you if you cannot narrate how the bidding went. It is a critical component.

THE MEANING OF THIS REBID MAY SURPRISE YOU!

by Barbara Seagram

S W N E

1D P 1S 2H
2NT

What does the rebid of 2NT mean? It is not a jump but how many points does this show?

Let's start with looking at this hand:

You have the following hand and the auction above took place.

S 32
H A75
D KQ87
C A865

If your RHO had not bid after 1D - 1S, you would now have bid 1 NT. NOTE: That is ONE NO TRUMP.

If your partner had instead bid 1H and RHO did not bid, you would now raise to 2H (that one may also surprise you but you do not need 4 card support to raise partner's response to the 2 level. All you need is 3 cards and an inability to bid No Trumps).

If you need help with this, check www.barbaraseagram.com Go to ARTICLES on the right. Click on that and the top article is Raising partner with 3 card support.

Note that if RHO had bid 1S after your partner had responded 1H, you could now make a support double, if you and partner play these (and you should).

Back to this case scenario:

S W N E

1D P 1S 2H
?

With your minimum hand above, you are required to pass. Even holding a H stopper, you will still pass. You see, bidding NT at the one level is a whole different ball game than bidding it at the two level. Remember that your partner may have only 6 points.

So, how many points does it promise?

NOT 13-15 ...a minimum hand...as you would have passed with that hand.

NOT 15-17 HCP balanced as you would have opened 1NT.

Therefore your rebid of 2NT promises 18-19 HCP, even though you have not jumped.

By the way, one more tip:

You have

S 4
H A762
D KJ65
C AJ93

You open 1D, partner responds 1S, you must NOT bid 1NT now. This bid promises 12-14 HCP indeed BUT also promises to have a reasonably balanced hand and you do not. A balanced hand promises no singletons or voids. Thus you must rebid 2C with this hand NOT 1NT. If you rebid 1NT, you guarantee two or three cards in the Spade suit.

KNOW YOUR SYSTEM

		10872	
		AK762	
		K73	
		A	
AQJ6			43
95			J8
4			QJ8652
J108753			Q94
N	S	K95	
		Q1043	
1H	3D *	A109	
Pass		K62	

* Bergen Raises are a great convention but sometimes we all have a brain freeze and forget what we are playing.

Partner (North) alerted 3D but then passed. She thought the partnership was playing weak jump shifts which is also a very common treatment. Indeed, they were playing other jumps to be weak but not 1 of a major - 3C or 1 of a major - 3D. In the world of Bergen, 3C here would show 6-9 points and 4 card support for the major and 3D shows 10-12 and 4 card support. The latter was the scenario for this hand.

So South played the hand in 3D on a 3-3 fit when the partnership had a NINE card Heart fit.

It might not have been so bad but lo and behold, East showed up with SIX diamonds. Alas.

On this hand, North's rebid would have been 4H after the 3D Bergen Raise, which makes easily. It is a game of mistakes. They seldom happen twice!

From the wonderful publication: "Alert" Grand River Bridge Club, Kitchener

Even if your hearing is excellent (not always the case for bridge players), you are not allowed to hear your partner's alerts, announcements, and explanations. This is a hard concept to wrap your mind around, but please try - because it's an important part of bridge ethics.

Unlike, say, tennis, where you are allowed to talk to your partner and yell at him not to hit the ball because it's going to go out, in bridge your communication with your partner is confined to the use of the cards in the bidding box - the numbers 1 to 7, the four suits and no trump, double, pass, and redouble. Any other communication with your partner - such as slamming down the double card to make it clear it's for penalty or hesitating for a long time before bidding to convey your possession of extra values - is Unauthorized Information.

Into this category fall your partner's alerts, announcements, and explanations. They are strictly for the ears of the opponents, and you must pretend that you didn't hear them - even if, indeed especially if, they alert you to the fact that your partnership is having a bidding misunderstanding. It is simply not ethical to be "woken up" to the true meaning of your bids/your partner's interpretation of them.

TRY A SQUEEZE

	A532	
	A52	
	AQJ3	
	AK	
7		J10986
76		J1098
1095		72
J1097532		84
S	N	
	KQ4	
	KQ43	
	K864	
	Q6	
1NT	7NT	
West leads C Jack.		

Alas, it looks like there are only 12 tricks to be had. Unless S or H divide 3-3. Odds are NOT in your favour.

You search frantically for another way to make this. Run the Diamond suit and hope fervently that the same person has both S Jxxx and H Jxxx.

In that case, he will have to make two discards. Look at poor East. When he parts with either two spades or one heart and one spade, now good things happen for you. This is known as a simple squeeze.

Now play the majors and hope for the best. In this case, it works! Yeah!!

Hand by Julian Laderman. Commentary by Barbara.

4-4 Fits Versus 5-3 Fits

		652		
		63		
		A98		
		QJ986		
QJ94			AK108	
AJ1085			KQ2	
62			J43	
A4			752	
W	N	E	S	73
1H	P	1S	P	974
2S	P	4H	P	KQ1075
4S				K103

K D led. Then D Q, then shift to Club 3.

This hand illustrates how much better a hand plays with a 4-4 fit as trump vs 5-3, when you have a choice of one or the other.

Always choose the 4-4 fit. You can draw trump and then play the 5-3 fit and make discards on the extra winners.

This hand makes 5 if Spades (4-4) are trump but only 4 if Hearts are trump.

Overtricks are everything!

Hand by Julian Laderman. Commentary by Barbara

FOLLOWING THE RULES

by Michael Berkowitz

I could never seem to follow the rules to my big sister's games. She would invent these sports that involved throwing balls at objects (only occasionally at me) or scoring goals or finding things. I would always think that I was winning, only to discover that I had violated some rule, like I didn't hop on every third step or had thrown the ball with my right hand.

One time, I thought I had at long last learned all of the rules and played perfectly. I was in the middle of a victory dance when my sister broke the bad news: it was opposite day!

Bridge is almost as complicated a game as the ones my sister devised. At least in bridge, the rules should be relatively consistent. That doesn't mean that you have to read the rulebook... that's why we have directors. That said, you should be aware of how the rules can affect your play. After going on a Regional at Sea which featured "Ask a Director", I have some key takeaways.

1) Directors are there to help

Too many people worry that it looks rude to call a director over. They worry that they are calling the director on the opponents and that this will seem mean. In response to this fear, director David Metcalf said, "I have never been called 'on someone'. I am called to the table." Directors are there to help with irregularities. If something strange has happened or might happen, call the director to help out. You should go out of your way not to make rulings of your own, this is like defending yourself in court or cutting your own hair—sure it might work out, but often things will be worse. Make sure you do this politely, and **remember that all directors have the same last name: "please"**.

2) What do you do when something goes wrong with the alerts?

The alert system is complicated and it can change from time to time. That said, remember the point of alerts: alerts are designed to help the OPPONENTS understand the auction. We alert our partner's bid (never our own) in order to allow the opponents to know that a bid isn't natural. If you aren't sure whether a convention is alertable, it's always good to err on the side of alerting. Remember that when you alert all you do is say alert (and use the alert card in the bidding box to help those people with hearing problems). Only explain a bid's meaning if asked.

3) What do I do if my partner gives incorrect information?

If your partner makes a mistaken explanation, and you are the declaring side, correct the explanation before a lead is made. If you are the defenders, you should tell your opponents after the play has concluded that partner gave a wrong explanation. If your partner gives an explanation and you realize that the explanation is right, but your bid was wrong then you might call a director to help you out. The rule is that
A) You should bid like you never heard your partner's information and B) You do not have to tell the opponents what is in your hand.

4) What do I do if I'm not sure what my opponents' bids mean?

Bridge is a game where we are entitled to know everything the opponents know. If your opponent makes a bid that might be weak or strong and they don't alert (or even if they do) you can ask what it means when it's your turn to bid. Don't be embarrassed for not knowing something. If their explanation of what a bid means is just to say the name of a convention: Michaels, Cappelletti, Jacoby, Jordan, etc., and that means nothing to you, you should ask to explain what it actually shows. If it doesn't matter

to you what your opponents' bids mean, because you aren't about to bid or make a lead directing double, you are better off waiting until the auction is completed to ask any questions.

5) What do I do if I'm not sure what my partner's bid means?

Don't say anything! If asked, you can answer that you aren't sure. The director may have to get involved to sort out the issue, but that's why they get the big bucks. Don't give any incorrect information if you can avoid it. A simple, "We haven't discussed this auction," is best if you don't know. If you have discussed it, then say "I forget," and the the director may be able to help by taking you away from the table and letting the opponents ask partner.

6) A director just told me something that sounds very different from what I heard before. How do I know what's right?

You always have a right to ask to see the lawbook (later). Even if a director doesn't have it on them, they can look up the relevant law on the ACBL's website. Some situations can seem similar but are very different. For instance, there's a big difference between a defender accidentally failing to follow suit (and realizing it immediately) and the same thing happening to declarer. Similarly, there's a large difference between making a mistaken bid (a bid that doesn't follow your agreements) and making a mistaken explanation (an explanation that doesn't follow your agreement). While some players think that a director is after them, the truth is that the laws are clear about specific situations and a director should be able to help a player understand why a particular ruling was made.

RULE OF SEVEN **by Larry Cohen**

Rules? Schmules. There are too many "Rules of #x" out there. I prefer the Rule of Thinking.

If you must know, the "Rule of 7" was designed to tell declarer in notrump how many times to hold up. For example, say he gets a heart lead and this is the heart suit:

North

H 54

South

H A54

How many times should declarer hold up?

The Rule says to total up your hearts (you have 5) and subtract from 7. That leaves "2" which is how many times you should hold up.

Now, let's forget that rule and try some good old logic instead.

We will look at 4 deals and in each case we will have H 4 opposite H A875.

Let's start with this one:

S K103
H 4
D KQJ1098
C A76

S 982
H Q1062
D 74
C 9542

S 654
H KJ93
D A3
C KQJ10

S AQJ7
H A875
D 652
C 83

Against 3NT, West leads the H2 (fourth best).

What does the Rule of 7 say?

What does the Rule of Thinking say?

The Rule of 7 says to hold up twice ($7-5 = 2$).

The Rule of Thinking says to win the first heart and don't hold up.

From the lead of the deuce (4th best), declarer knows the hearts are splitting 4-4. Not only does that make a hold-up play irrelevant, but it gives the defense a chance to switch to a devastating club and defeat the contract. Winning the first heart produces 9 tricks.

On this deal the Winning Play was to hold up 0 times.

Editor's note: When opponent leads a 2, assume fourth best. Since there is no card lower than the 2 and thus no FIFTH card, assume a 4 card suit. Thus when E wins with D Ace, opponents can take 3 H tricks and D Ace but that is all...and you make your contract.

QJ8
4
953
AK10962

K643
K6
A762
753

52
QJ10932
QJ109
4

A1097
A875
K4
QJ8

This time East opens 2H and South reaches 3NT on the H K lead.

What does the Rule of 7 say?

What does the Rule of Thinking say?

The Rule of 7 says to hold up twice ($7-5 = 2$).

In that case you would duck the H K and duck the next heart.

East would then shift to the D Q for down two.

The Rule of Thinking says that hearts are 6-2 (East opened 2H).

Win the second heart (you know they are 6-2) and cross to dummy in clubs for the spade finesse. If the SK is wrong and East has the DA, it's not your day.

On this deal the Winning Play was to Hold up 1 time.

	985	
	4	
	K98	
	QJ10983	
Q102		J765
KJ962		Q103
J72		Q1043
75		A2
	AK3	
	A875	
	A65	
	K64	

Against 3NT, West leads the H6, fourth best. East plays the HQ.

What does the Rule of 7 say?

What does the Rule of Thinking say?

The Rule of 7 says to hold up 2 times ($7-5=2$).

This time the Rule of Thinking yields the same result.

You will have to knock out the CA.

There is no other suit you fear a shift to.

If hearts are 4-4, nothing will matter.

If hearts are 6-2, holding up once would suffice, but you have no way to know if they are 6-2.

Holding up twice (winning the third round) caters to this very common 5-3 split. East's HQ wins the first trick. You let the H10 hold the second trick. On the third heart, there is no benefit to holding up again (if they are 4-4, it won't matter). So, you win the third round of hearts and play clubs. If one defender has 5 hearts and the CA, there is nothing you can do about it. Here, the holdup play (twice) leads to 10 tricks.

On this deal the Winning Play was to Hold up 2 times.

	K87	
	4	
	AQ762	
	A1097	
10964		532
KQJ10		9632
?5		?1094
632		54
	AQJ	
	A875	
	83	
	KQJ8	

Playing matchpoints, you are in 3NT with the H K lead.

What does the Rule of 7 say?

What does the Rule of Thinking say?

The Rule of 7 says to hold up twice ($7-5=2$).

The Rule of Thinking says to hold up 3 times!

You have 9 top tricks. The only issue is how to try for an overtrick.

The obvious source for an overtrick is the diamond finesse--but is it safe to take it?

If you win an early heart and run your winners and then take the diamond finesse, the defense might set you by cashing too many hearts. You don't know they are 4-4. They could be 5-3.

If you win an early heart, you won't know the heart split. Even winning the third heart is not safe. What if West started with KQJ and East with 109xxx? Then when you take the diamond finesse, you risk defeat.

Why not hold up hearts (no shift will hurt) until the 4th round? Once you see they are 4-4, you can take the diamond finesse in complete safety.

On this deal the Winning Play was to Hold up 3 times!

There you have it. I always prefer thinking and logic to "rules." The Rule of 7 told you the wrong information nearly every time. With it, you would have robotically held up twice on each deal. In Real Life, the correct play was to hold up 0,1,2, and 3 times. This should put the Rule of 7 into "Rule Heaven."

Bonus deal:

Try this one, this time with spades the troublesome suit:

Playing matchpoints you wind up in 3NT after West overcalls 1S. West leads the S K against 3NT.

	54	
	AQJ109	
	J8	
	J1092	
KQJ82		1097
863		542
54		K76
K76		Q843
	A63	
	K7	
	AQ10932	
	A5	

What does the rule of 7 say? What does the rule of thinking say?

The rule of seven says hold up twice. The rule of thinking says don't hold up at all! The point of holding up is to create a safe hand. Here, you will need to take a diamond finesse eventually and it will have to go into West. If the finesse wins, you'll take 13 tricks, unless you made the phantom hold up play.

On this deal the Winning Play was to Hold up 0 times.

Leading partner's suit

Let's say you are defending a 4H contract and p has bid Spades.

You have NOT raised her.

If you are going to lead her suit (you will not always do so, by the way...but if she has overcalled, showing quality, then you will)...

A65 lead Ace, because we do not underlead an Ace against a suit contract

Q65. Lead 5...bottom of something

K65. Ditto.

95...always top of a doubleton, no matter what.

952...lead small (2) because you have NOT raised her and this way, she knows you do not have a doubleton.

If you have raised her...

A65 lead Ace, because we do not underlead an Ace against a suit contract

Q65. Lead 5...bottom of something

K65. Ditto.

95...always top of a doubleton, no matter what.

952...lead the 9 because you have raised her and she knows you do not have a doubleton. You would not raise with doubleton.

Defending against NT... all rules the same BUT with A65, lead the 5...bottom of something because it is okay to underlead an ace against a NT contract cuz they cannot trump your ace later.

OPENER'S REBID QUIZ **by Kevin Wilson**

Opener's rebid is the time in the auction for opener to show additional distribution and to narrow his high card point range. South has opened the bidding in the following auctions and now it is South's turn to make a second bid. You are asked to choose which hand (A, B, or C) fits the auction. Assume that nobody is vulnerable and that you're playing pairs (Matchpoints). Then choose what bid you would make with the rest of the examples before reading on.

Which hand most closely resembles the auction for South?

S	N
1D	1S
3S	

South hands are below. Choose which one fits best.

Hand A:

**S KQJ5
H 1084
D AK109
C J5**

Hand B:

**S Kj93
H J2
D AKJ873
C 4**

Hand C:

**S AK107
H AJ3
D KQJ3
C J10**

Bidding Commentary

The hand that best meets the auction is Hand B. Opener has shown about 11-21 for the opening 1D bid. Opener wants to narrow that range for responder and also wants to show the spade fit at the same time. Opener has three basic bidding choices to accomplish both goals. Opener raises spades to show the fit, but opener can raise spades to 2S, 3S, or 4S. A raise to 2S shows about 13-15 pts and includes upgrades for distribution and support points since a fit has been discovered. A jump raise to 3S shows about 16-18 support points and a jump to game shows 19-21. Responder may have as few as 6 points for the 1S response so the jump to game must have enough strength that makes ten tricks a reasonable prospect. While hand B has only 13 high card points, the trick taking ability of this hand has been bolstered by the addition of a trump fit! The extra diamonds and value of the singleton club are enough to invite game even though partner may have only 6 high card points.

Hand A isn't quite strong enough for a jump to 3S. This hand has 14 high card points and one additional point for the double club. An experienced player will like the married (touching) honors in diamonds and spades and will also appreciate the intermediate cards in his long suits. That still isn't enough to invite game opposite a minimum response. The correct bid is 2S.

Hand C has 19 high card points and a doubleton club. This hand is too strong to only invite game. The correct rebid with these cards is 4S. The chance for ten tricks is too great to pass up. You may not always make 4S but responder will also be better able to evaluate when a slam is possible as well. Remember that while partner only promises about 6 points for a response, partner is still unlimited and may bid again over your 4S bid. (Ed note: This is not a shut-off bid)