

BARBARA'S BRIDGE TIP

We picked up these cards a few days ago:

I held: (Let's call me North for convenience's sake)

S A742

H A7

D AK4

C AKQ4

I opened 2C

Alex held: (We'll call him South)

S KJ3

H KQJ10832

D 102

C 9

Alex responded 2H to my 2C opener. This was showing 8 or more HCP and a five-card suit headed by two of the top 3 honours or at least a six-card suit that may not be quite as fabulous. A 3 NT rebid by me showed 23-24 HCP Balanced.

How would you now continue with the South hand? Here is what happened at our table:

2C - 2H

3N - 4C (Gerber asking for Aces)

4D - 5C (More Gerber, asking for Kings)

5S - 7NT

4D showed or all 4 Aces.

5S showed 2 Kings.

Alex could now count 13 tricks, based on the magnificence of his Heart suit.

So, he bid 7NT which is the ultimate contract!! It does not happen nearly often enough. You count the tricks and see if you would have done the same thing. As a matter of fact, the Spade Queen drops under Ace and King of Spades, so Alex said he should have bid 8NT!!

This was another hand, a few days later:

I held: (I'll be North)

S 1096

H K10765

D J

C K1094

Alex (we'll call him South) held:

S Q82

H A942

D K963

C Q5

West opened 1D, I passed and East bid 1NT. It proceeded Pass, Pass back to me.

It is important to not let these auctions die. If opponents only have 20 points between them, then our side has the BALANCE of the points...approximately 20 points also. So you just have to get into the auction to push the opponents around a bit.

I bid 2H and look at the delicious dummy I bought!! I made 4 because the opponents were very friendly but I should most likely make fewer tricks. BUT they will make 1 NT, that's what matters. There is a write-up I have done on Balancing that follows. Have a look:

BALANCING by BARBARA

What does "balancing" mean in bridge vocabulary?

You are in the "direct" seat if your RHO (Right Hand Opponent) has made the last bid:

e.g. Your RHO (right Hand Opponent) opens 1C and it is your turn. You are in the "DIRECT" seat. There are strict guidelines to be followed.

You are said to be "balancing" when you are in the pass out seat after a bid by your left-hand opponent (LHO).

e.g. LHO bids 1C - Pass - Pass to you.

If you were to pass, the auction would now be all over. If the opponents have opened with one of a suit, you simply must not allow them to play a contract at such a low level. You must either:

Try to push them to a higher level *or*

Try to buy the contract for your side instead of letting them make an easy part-score

The action that you take in the balancing seat is often different from that taken in the direct seat. You should tend to overbid by 3 points when you are in the pass out seat. Just add 3

points to the value of your hand to determine what you should bid. Why do you do this? To

protect partner, who may have quite a good hand. For example, your partner would have had to pass after 1C on her right with the following hand:

A542

K6

KJ72

Q65

Since the responder to the opening bid has also passed (showing 0-5 points) you can now be more aggressive, since your partner most likely has some goodies.

Let's practice! In all cases, the bidding has proceeded.

1C by LHO - Pass-Pass to you.

What should you bid on each of these hands:

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
S Q2	S Q75	S Q5432	S A76	S 65
H AJ10	H A102	H 76	H A987	H AQ4
D K976	D KQJ	D AQ76	D Q1054	D 765
C QJ109	C AJ94	C 87	C 42	C AQJ98

Answers:

1. In direct seat, you would pass. In balancing seat, you should bid 1 N.T. (You have 16 pts for a fleeting instant, having added those 3 points!)

2. Now you really do have 17 H.C.P. In direct seat, you would overcall 1 N.T. : in balancing seat you will double first and then bid notrumps later.

3. In direct seat, you will pass with this tired, moth-eaten spade suit. In balancing seat, you must overcall 1S.

4. In direct seat, you will pass. In balancing seat, make a takeout double.

5. In direct or balancing seat, you must pass. Your only decent suit is clubs, and the opponents will have a most unpleasant time in their 1C contract. Some people say that you should consider that you are “borrowing a king” when you balance. Whenever I have taught “balancing” this way, my students always get very fussy about which king they wish to borrow! Thus, I prefer to base actions on “adding 3 points”. You must remember, however, that since you are overbidding in this seat, that your partner must now compensate (as responder to your bid) by underbidding accordingly.

Sometimes the bidding will go
1H by your RHO - Pass by you. 2H by LHO.

This is another fine time to balance and apply all of the above rules.

However, it is more dangerous to balance if the opponents have both bid and they have not found a fit:

Bridge is a bidders' game. Get involved! Don't let the opponents steal contracts at a low level. Become a feared opponent! Balance! Alex reminds you that the meek shall not inherit the earth.

P.S. it is called Balancing because your side has the "balance of the points" in this situation, most of the time. Often: 20 (or so) points for opponents and 20 (or so) for your side.

ALEX'S BRIDGE TIP

We only lead the ace from AKx(x) against suit contracts at Trick 1. In the middle of a hand, if you have the AKx(x) and decide to lead the suit, then you should actually lead the king. You should also lead the king if you have the KQx(x), but partner will be able to tell by the end of the trick whether you have the ace or the queen.

For example, if your king wins the trick or if the queen is in dummy or in partner's hand, it is obvious that you also have the ace.

The reason for this switch is as follows. You may be on lead partway through the play and want to switch to a suit in which your only honor is the ace. Especially against a trump contract, it would be normal to start this suit by playing the ace. If you do so, partner will know that you do not have the king, since with both the ace and king, you would have led the king.

And now from Larry Cohen...

Once dummy is visible, it is often a viable defensive strategy to cash an ace (without the king). While you wouldn't lead an ace from Axx, you certainly might want to cash it at trick 3. Maybe declarer took a losing trump finesse and you won your K. You looked at the dummy and saw long, strong diamonds. You needed to take tricks. You quite often would need to bang down an ace (without the king). You don't want partner to think that you have the king when you bang down an ace in the middle of the deal.

Why does this matter? Suppose it is your play at trick 5 (against 2) in this position:

Dummy

H Q107

YOU (OPPONENT)

H AKJ2

Suppose you mistakenly lay down the A (erroneously thinking ace-from ace-king applies). Now, you try to get partner in (with some other suit) so that he can play another heart. However, he won't play another heart. He will think that you have only Axx or the like and were cashing the ace (hoping he could encourage if he had the king). You are denying the AK if you lay down the ace. The correct card is the king. Then, when partner gets in, he will know you started with aceking. This is just one layout/example of many, but the bottom line is:

Ace-from-ace-king is only at trick one.