

## PLAY OF THE HAND CHALLENGES by BARBARA

	S 8 H KJ104 D Q109762 C Q8	
S K9742 H 7653 D J5 C 32		S A63 H 982 D K3 C KJ1094
	S QJ105 H AQ D A84 C A876	

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2C	Pass
2S	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT	All P		

West was reluctant to lead a Spade, knowing that South had four of them. He would not lead a Heart, knowing that North must have four of those. Clubs was out of the question because if East had good Clubs, he would have made a lead-directing double. So West led Diamond Jack.

Look at how poorly THAT lead works out and guess whose fault that was! East should have said DOUBLE immediately after the 2C Stayman bid. The fact that this is a fake bid (an artificial bid asking partner about the majors), East's Double would have been a lead-directing double, saying to West "If you are on lead, lead a Club if you wish to live through the day!"

Sadly, East's brain was on vacation and missed this opportunity to make a lead-directing Double. If West had led a Club, the contract would have been defeated as East has FOUR Club tricks plus the Ace Spades and maybe a Diamond trick for either East or West.

Sadly, I have to report that I was East and the steam came out from Alex's ears for the rest of the game. He says this is why his ears protrude!



	S J10652 H A73 D 952 C J6	
S K8743 H KQ109 D --- C AKQ3		S --- H 2 D AKQ743 C 1098542
	S AQ9 H J8654 D J1086 C 7	

West	North	East	South
1S	Pass	1NT	Pass
3H	Pass	3NT	All pass

On the above hand, Alex as West, opened 1S. I responded 1NT because 2D (playing Two Over One) shows an opening bid. We play semi-forcing NT which merely means that East has a shortage in Spades and 6-12 points including distribution.

Once West jumped to 3H (an overbid by 1 point) , I know game is there and while this hand sure does not look like 3NT, I am stuck. So 3NT it is.

Opening lead was Diamond Jack. I should expect Diamonds to break 4-3. So I can cash three high Diamonds and concede a Diamond, knowing that I can get back to my hand with a Club. The worry is that what if the Spades in NS hands are reversed. Now I may go down in 3NT, losing 3 Spades, a Heart and a Diamond. In any case, I had to try for an overtrick, before revealing the entire Diamond situation.

At trick # 2, I led a small Heart to Dummy's King. East won and returned a Diamond. Making 4. What a happy Club fit. It makes 6 Clubs but we cannot figure out how to get there.

	S AKQJ643 H AJ D 1095 C A	
S 7 H KQ10953 D Q87 C KQ2		S --- H 864 D 6432 C J98754
	S 109852 H 72 D AKJ C 1063	

South	West	North	East
Pass	1H	Double	Pass
2S	Pass	4NT	Pass
5C	Pass	5NT	Pass
6D	Pass	6S	All Pass

First, let's discuss the auction above. Why did North say "Double" first versus overcalling 1S? Overcalling 1S shows 8-17 points and North has 22 points including his distribution.

Why did South bid 2S instead of 1S? He would bid 1S with a lousy hand and 0-8 pts and he has a bit more than that so he must jump to show 9-11 points. Only a 4-card suit is required.

4NT was Keycard Blackwood and South, playing 1430 responded 5C showing 1 or 4 Keycards. North was encouraged and, trying for a grand slam, asked for Kings. South gave a disappointing ONE King response and North settled for 6S.

Opening lead: Heart King.

Declarer Play: South must note that North has more trumps than South. Therefore, Declarer must count losers from the North's point of view. North is the aster hand because it has more trumps:

LOSERS: S: 0 H: 1 Loser D: 1 loser. C: 0 losers as N has singleton Ace.

It looks to Declarer as though he has to try the Diamond finesse BUT the chances of success are slim since West opened the bidding and thus is marked with the Diamond Queen.

See if you can figure out how to make this hand?

When your contract depends on a finesse, think of whether or not you can try doing a Strip and Throw-In.

Declarer wins Hearts Ace and draws one round of trump. Then plays Club Ace. Over to South and ruffs a Club in North hand. Back to South with a Spade and ruffs another Club in North hand.

West is marked with the Heart Queen. Instead of doing a Diamond finesse, now Declarer must lead the Heart Jack. West wins it and is now stuck. If West leads a Club or a Heart, Declarer is given a sluff and a ruff. Declarer discards a Diamond from one hand and ruffs in the other.

Making 6S. Finesses work only 50% of the time. The strip and throw in always works when the conditions are right.

This is also known as an end-play because it usually occurs near the end of the hand.

## All About Alerts

### From Grand River Bridge Club

*The name of their weekly newsletter is called The Alert also!*

In the course of a Face-To-Face bridge auction, whenever a player makes an alertable bid, their partner is required immediately to say "ALERT". Bids are alertable when they represent a special partnership understanding that "may not be readily understood and anticipated by a significant number of players".

Alertable bids are in red on the convention card. After the auction is over, if one of **the defenders** is aware of a failure to alert, they cannot tell their opponents until the hand is over because the information may wake up their own partner and help them defend the hand better. In that case, this defender should reveal the failure to alert or mistaken information as soon as the hand is over, and the director should be summoned if the opponents feel they may have been damaged.

If the **declarer or the dummy** is aware of a failure to alert, they should tell the opponents before the opening lead (it's okay to tell the opponents before the hand is played because in this case it doesn't matter if the other partner is woken up because one of them is dummy), and the director should be summoned if the defenders feel they may have been damaged. Now the onus is on the director to make things fair, and that is why our directors are paid the big bucks.

Given bridge players' penchant for making up and tweaking *conventions*, there are an almost infinite number of alertable bids.

Some common examples are:

**Jacoby 2NT, splinters, inverted minors, 2H bust bid following partner's 2C opener, 2S transfers following partner's 1NT opener, Ogust, new minor forcing, fourth suit forcing, Meckwell, DONT and Cappelletti, and Lebensohl.**

- Bids like Stayman and take-out doubles are so common that they are readily understood and anticipated by a significant number of players, thus not alertable.

- Bids like Michaels and the unusual no trump are not alertable.
- With the exception of splinters, bids past 3NT by opener are not immediately alertable, but once the bidding is over, the opponents must be notified of any ace-asking or key-card-asking sequences (these are called delayed alerts).

As with announcements, in F2F games the alerting is done by your partner, while in online games you do your own alerting.

Alertable bids are in red on our convention cards, but some of the red bids on our convention cards are no longer alertable (they were dropped from the list after our cards were printed). For example, support doubles and redoubles and Puppet Stayman after a 2NT opener (although the responses to Puppet Stayman are still alertable).

*Minor edits have been made.*

## **MAKE YOUR OPENING LEAD FIRST BEFORE WRITING DOWN THE CONTRACT PLEASE!**

Dee Fulton, a bridge teacher from Hawaii tells us why we must do this.

"It's an interesting exercise to do the math. 5-10 seconds per hand....let's settle on an average of 7.5 seconds. This includes laying down your cards, picking up the score sheet, opening the score sheet, picking up the pencil, writing down the contract, laying down the pencil, folding the score sheet shut, replacing the score sheet under the bidding box, and picking up and opening up and spreading your cards. Time flies when you're busy, and time is crawling for the dummy who is waiting for the lead to be made before putting down the dummy and writing down the score themselves. And when the dummy comes down, the declarer can now begin the process of planning the play *which does take time*. The seconds taken to write down a score before making the lead is time that the declarer could have had to be making their plan.

7.5 seconds per board

24 Boards per day

Face to Face bridge twice a week. That's an even 6 minutes/week.

52 weeks/year and now we're at 5 hours+ a year !!! (and that's not counting the extra bridge you might play at tournaments)

A decade of bridge and you lose over 2 days of your life waiting for the lead. "

## ADVICE FROM LARRY COHEN

"I don't know" is a scary phrase.

It forces us to be vulnerable. College-aged-me did not like being vulnerable, so I knew everything. That's why when my friend invited me kayaking, I said that sounded great—I had kayaked in lakes before. And when my friend asked if I had experience with Class V rapids, I should have said, "I don't know what that means" and instead said "Sure."

I found out the terrifying way that confessing ignorance is better than finding yourself totally unprepared later on.

It's a great idea for newer players to play against more experienced players. One of the best ways to learn is to jump into the deep end. It's like immersion learning for a language. However, one of the dangers of this sink or swim approach is that a bad experience can turn people away from bridge altogether.

How can newer players brace themselves? How can we get more experienced players to be less intimidating? There's no one answer. That said, everyone involved would be better off if we knew the fundamentals of procedure.

One of the best aspects of bridge is that there are no secrets. If a partnership has an agreed upon meaning for a bid, then their opponents get to know that meaning. If that partnership has special carding agreements (carding is: leads, signals or discards) which convey information, then the opponents are entitled to know that as well.

That doesn't mean we get to know what is in our opponents' hands. Our opponents might forget their agreements or they might even lie (sometimes known as a falsecard) by signaling that they like a suit that they don't or vice versa. As long as their partner is as in the dark as declarer, that's all kosher.

What isn't allowed is secret agreements. Now, most people hear secret agreement and think of something nefarious like pointing to their chest for a heart lead. That's not the most common source of secret agreements.

Most secret agreements are secret because of this conversation:

Experienced Player bidding: Alert

Inexperienced Player asking: What does that mean?

Experienced Player: Gazilli

Inexperienced Player: ... Okay.

[End Scene]

Players explain agreements using advanced terminology: Odd-Even, Meckwell, Flannery, instead of saying what things mean. If you're an experienced player doing this, please stop! Remember that not everyone has been studying the Encyclopedia of Bridge at night.

For the newer players, keep in mind that it's perfectly fine to ask for an additional explanation if your opponents do this. Don't be embarrassed—your opponent is the one who violated propriety here. There's one caveat to this. During the auction, if you have

no interest in bidding, it's better to pass and ask for an explanation once the auction has concluded. If you become the opening leader, you can do this once the auction ends. If you are the partner of the leader, you can ask when partner makes their (face down) lead. This is for everyone's protection. If you ask for an explanation and the opponent gives a wrong one, it puts their partner in an awkward position.

if someone asks you about an agreement for a situation and you have no idea what they are talking about, it's ok to say "I have no idea! I'm new to the game". That's much better than guessing.

Lastly, if something comes up and you're not sure what the procedure or rule is, call the director over (with a "Director, please" and a raise of your hand). Directors are there to make sure you don't have to guess about the rules.

To recap: When asked for an explanation of an agreement, overexplain (particularly if you have never seen this opponent). It's okay to have no agreement or even no idea what the opponent is asking for. When you need information from your opponents, don't let them get away with saying "Reverse Woolsey with a Lemon Twist".

## **TIPS FROM TONY JACKSON IN CALIFORNIA**

### **Raising responder with only 3 cards? When to do this.**

We've all been there: you open 1 of a minor and your partner bids 1 of a major and you (the opening bidder) have only 3 card support. Do you raise partner or bid something else? What if you have only a 7 card fit?

Here's a sample hand: 13 HCP

S: A 8 7

H: 9 3

D: K J 8 2

C: K Q 6 4

You open 1 diamond and your partner bids 1 spade. Now what? You have these choices:

choice 1: bid 1NT

choice 2: raise to 2 spades

choice 3: bid 2 clubs

Choice 1: you don't have a heart stopper, and the opponents are very likely to lead hearts so that could be a problem.

Choice 2: you might have only a 7 card fit. Is that ok? Is that going to cause a problem?

Choice 3: What if your partner is weak? They will probably pass or correct to 2 diamonds and you could be missing a heart fit.

What about pass? You can't do that! Your partner is unlimited in strength, so pass is simply out of the question.

Here's a second example:

S: A 8 7  
H: Q J 7 6  
D: K Q 8 3 2  
C: Q

Again, you open 1 diamond and partner bids 1 spade. You cannot bid 2 hearts since that is a reverse (showing 17 or more pts) and will force your side to the three level, which could be too high. What can you do? You really don't want to bid notrump with your singleton club, and you don't want to rebid your 5-card diamond suit.

Sometimes raising partner with only 3 card support is your best choice. You should not do this all the time, it's sort of a "what's the least worst bid I can make" kind of thing.

Mike Lawrence writes a lot about this topic in various books. In his "Insights in Bridge, Book 1" he says he will raise partner in this situation (holding 3 card support) about 1/3 of the time.

So I would encourage you to consider it.

### **Further thoughts:**

Question: Tony, isn't that what New Minor Forcing is for? Also, there is Fourth Suit Forcing: can't that help find a 5-3 fit?

Answer: Yes, you are correct that those conventions can help you find a 5-3 fit, but NMF is only possible if responder has an invitational or better hand; if responder is weak (which I suspect is the more frequent occurrence) then you can't use NMF. And 4SF requires responder to have a game-forcing hand, so it won't help you either if responder isn't strong.

Ed note: We can only use New Minor Forcing if the auction has gone something like  
1D - 1S

1NT - 2C is now New Minor Forcing. If opener has not bid 1NT as her rebid, we cannot use New Minor Forcing.

Question: What if we don't play the convention called Spiral? Can we still raise with only 3 cards?

Answer: Yes, yes, yes! Spiral is another way to investigate game (and find out if there is a 5-3 fit) but it requires that responder have an invitational hand. So even if you don't play spiral, you should still consider raising when you hold three card support for responder's major suit.



Question: what if I have a strong hand and want to invite game? Can I raise to 3 of the major with only 3-card support?

Answer: NO! If you make a jump raise to 3 of your partner's suit, you must have 4 card support!

Example:

S: A 8 7  
H: A Q 7 6  
D: K Q 8 3 2  
C: Q

This is like the example 2 hand, but since you have 17 hcp you can now reverse to 2 hearts.

Second example:

S: A 8 7  
H: 9 3  
D: A Q 8 2  
C: A K 6 4

Here you have 17 points: why didn't you open 1NT?

Third example:

S: A 8 7  
H: 9  
D: A 9 8 4 2  
C: A K 6 4

Here you have extra points but you must not raise partner's 1S to 3S. You are in a tough spot here. Unfortunately, you have to rebid 2 clubs here. You aren't quite strong enough to jump shift, which would be game forcing and show 18 or more points. You can't rebid 2NT with a singleton heart, that's just inviting a disaster! And your diamonds are not long or strong enough to rebid 3 diamonds.

Remember: when you open the bidding and then rebid a new suit that is lower-ranking, you are NOT denying a good hand! You could have as much as 18 HCP. All you are saying is "I'm not strong enough to make a game-forcing jump shift."

Summary: if you open the bidding and responder bids a major suit at the 1-level, you should consider raising when only holding 3 cards. But only to the 2-level.

*Mild edits by Barbara*

## Face-Down Opening Leads

### from Grand River's publication: The Alert

The first thing to make clear is that it is the card that must be face-down - not the player - on the opening lead. Now that this important distinction has been spelled out, let's tackle the reasoning behind it. The opening lead is often crucially important - Larry Cohen likes to tell about a hand (in a world championship game) where the choice of opening lead made a difference of 26 tricks!

So, the opening leader would very much like to get it right, and of course it would be great if his or her partner could just tell him what card to lead - but that wouldn't be cricket (or bridge)!

Here are some ways and means, however - for example, if the opening leader's partner were to ask some very pointed questions about what the opponents meant when they bid a particular suit, his interest in that suit might tip off the opening leader as to the best lead.

That is why **only the opening leader** is allowed to ask questions about the opponents' bids before selecting his or her lead.

But, by the same token it obviously wouldn't be fair to totally bar the other defender from asking questions about the auction. So, as a compromise, after the opening leader has asked his questions about the auction, he must place his opening lead face-down on the table and say "Do you have any questions, partner?"

At this point, the opening leader's partner may ask questions to his heart's content - but the opening lead cannot be changed.

Once the opening leader's partner has asked all his questions or indicated that he has no questions, then the opening lead is flipped over and the play of the hand begins.