

Helensburgh Bridge Club

Newsletter
March 2024



Club Reflections

Over recent months I and others have expressed concerns over membership numbers. We have records of 80+ members and 12+ tables playing twice per week. Heady days. Even 10 years ago we had 12 tables twice in a week.

Lockdown. Now we have 60+ members and for February struggled to have 6 tables on a good night. This is where we are. Apparently. A sinister inevitability is that every 365 days members become 1 year older. At the start of the season Christine's press adverts attracted 2 new members.

Now a glance at the member's list (*website*) reveals there are around 13 *members* whom I have not seen appear at the table or online since September. I play both evenings and on most of them. Over 20% of our membership does not play. Effectively, that 20% does not exist. Is no one else bothered?

Our real membership is about 50 and the decline will continue from this much lower base.

Perhaps I too should just pack my fiddle and head to the warmth of Rome.

Club Table Play - Tuesdays

March 5th These reports no longer form the basis for a weekly press report. And as full results are available on the website (*if wanted*) I'll deal with a hand or point that is of interest to me, and hopefully, some others. More important to me just now is the question was it a squeeze that allowed me to scrape 50% on BBO this morning, by landing a desperate slam for 100% on the last hand. If so, can I use the hand as illustration, somewhere? Answer tomorrow (*so see Thursday*). Meanwhile

Dlr: West
Vul: None

♠ 7 5 2
♥ A J 3
♦ A 5 4
♣ K 9 5 3

NORTH
WEST
8
EAST
SOUTH

♠ 10 9 3
♥ K Q 10 7 6 5
♦ K 7 6
♣ 7

♠ J 4
♥ 8
♦ Q J 9 8 3
♣ Q J 10 6 4

♠ A K Q 8 6
♥ 9 4 2
♦ 10 2
♣ A 8 2

	♠	♦	♥	♣	N
N	2	-	1	3	3
S	1	-	1	3	3
E	-	1	-	-	-
W	-	1	-	-	-

[View Larger](#) [Play it again](#)

Board No 8 None Vul Dealer West									
NS	EW	Bid	By	Ld	Tks	+Sc	-Sc	+	-
1	15	2♠	W	♥8	7	50		+1.00	-1.00
2	12	2♠	N	♣8	5	150		-3.80	+3.80
3	14	3♠	W	♥8	7	100		+2.60	-2.60
4	11	2♠	N	♦8	6	100		-2.40	+2.40
5	13	3♠	W	♥8	7	100		+2.60	-2.60

Ann glanced at the results on Tuesday night and said there was something wrong.

#8 results are different. Contracts of 2S or 3S by every pair is normal but NOT by North then West on a 2-3 fit. North led ♥8 but that card is in West's hand. Or East led ♣8 or ♦8 having neither card.

Then on #6 how ♥6, ♠10, and ♣6 were led against NS contracts from NS hands. Would South bid NT with a void and only a combined 18 count?

How? Apparently **not** an error in dealing order with both North and West playing spade contracts. Mis-boarding? Unlikely - right at 2 where it started, so wrong at 1 and 5 switched right again at 4 and wrong again at 3.

Carol found it was a dealing blip. Try the results of 7 under this hand, those of 6 under 7 and these under 6. You are forgiven dealer, for providing a mystery comic story.

Note provided all players play the same boards the results are valid. It's when boards are fouled that they have to be scrubbed. There is still a risk of this with boards being still removed from (*the centre of*) the table and rotated.

March 12th Moving from the reporting format I considered an Arthurian twist “Nights at the Square Table”. Which led me to check tables. Oddly the laws do not specify any kind of table, despite defining the obvious like “contestant”, “opponent”, “pack” and “event” etc. But they **do** specify where the board is placed. Perhaps the law is an ass.

A description of “bridge tables” is given by retailers for their goods which are generally 80-90 cm square (costing from £47 to well over £300). Okay the Rosslea tables are more than a bit short of even 80 cm but they can accommodate the board in the middle and declarer “plays a card from dummy by naming the card”. Which helps prevent 14+ cards appearing in declarer’s hand in the next round (which has happened far too often).

A boring night for East, I played 3 hands of the 25. The coincidentally my first was #14 and my 14th deal. Even then the 6NT was not played but claimed at trick 2. The on #15 it was 6NT for partner making 13 when ♥K proves to be favourably placed. Consecutive slams!

<p>Dlr: South Vul: All</p> <p>♠ 3 2 ♥ 9 8 ♦ A 9 4 3 ♣ K 10 9 6 4</p> <p>♠ 4 ♥ J 7 5 4 ♦ K Q 8 ♣ A Q 8 3 2</p> <p>♠ A Q J 8 6 ♥ Q 2 ♦ J 7 6 5 2 ♣ 7</p>	<p>NORTH</p> <p>WEST EAST</p> <p>7</p> <p>SOUTH</p>	<p>♠ K 10 9 7 5 ♥ A K 10 6 3 ♦ 10 ♣ J 5</p>	<p>South can count a sketchy 12 but vulnerable may pass, West a shade better will open 1C. East has the problem of which major but going to bid both will chose 1S then 2H. Most reached game. [Actually, South opened West doubled but the outcome was 4H.]</p> <p>South led ♣7 or North ♠3 (to ♠A or ♠Q and then return of ♣7). Decision time, ♠A or duck to try for 3 clubs.</p> <p>Duck and you lose ♣K, a ruff plus ♠Q, and ♦A, down 1.</p> <p>Rise with ♠A, draw trump and your winners roll in as H-7, D-1 and C-2. Just 23HCP on a clearly distributional hand, why take a risk?</p>																						
<p>7</p> <p>12 11</p> <p>10</p>	<p>♣♦♥♠N</p> <table border="1"> <tr><td>N</td><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>E</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>4</td><td>1</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>4</td><td>-</td><td>1</td></tr> </table>	N		-	2	-	-	-	S	-	2	-	-	-	E	2	-	4	1	1	W	2	-	4	-
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S	-	2	-	-	-																				
E	2	-	4	1	1																				
W	2	-	4	-	1																				

March 19th It just goes to show how quickly one can forget the rules. I led ♣3 and declarer began to spread the hand as dummy, but was stopped. Nobody knew and it wasn’t found in the rule book. Eventually, it was agreed to have the proper dummy spread and carry on.

Of course this was correct. The confusion arose from the half-remembered Law 54 A “After a faced lead out of turn ...If declarer begins to spread his hand... he must spread his entire hand. Dummy becomes declarer.” It wasn’t “out of turn” and declarer can show all his cards as long as he “demonstrably” does not intend to claim (Law 48).

Not a slam was bid. The first of 2 possible slams was the hand of the tale above. Both were impossible to find though #21 seemed easy to make.

<p>Dlr: South Vul: E/W</p> <p>♠ K Q 8 ♥ A Q 6 3 ♦ 8 6 ♣ Q J 9 5</p> <p>♠ 7 6 5 ♥ K 10 9 8 4 2 ♦ K 5 3 ♣ 3</p> <p>♠ A J 10 9 ♥ 7 ♦ A Q 7 4 ♣ A 10 6 4</p>	<p>NORTH</p> <p>WEST EAST</p> <p>3</p> <p>SOUTH</p>	<p>♠ 4 3 2 ♥ J 5 ♦ J 10 9 2 ♣ K 8 7 2</p>	<p>I can why no one reached 6S. South opens 1C and over 1H has to lie with 1S or 1NT. I’d choose the latter and happily pass North’s raise to game. 11 ticks are easy if you finesse correctly for S-4 H-2, D-1 and C-4. That’s a 25% chance.</p> <p>It the same poor chance for 6C and only about 8% for 6S! The only possibility of the extra trick is in trumps and in 6S that mean a dummy reversal to ruff 2 hearts in hand. And that needs a 3-3 trump split as well as both finesses. 3NT is the place to be.</p>																						
<p>14</p> <p>6 5</p> <p>15</p>	<p>♣♦♥♠N</p> <table border="1"> <tr><td>N</td><td>6</td><td>5</td><td>2</td><td>6</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td><td>6</td><td>5</td><td>3</td><td>6</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td>E</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> </table>	N		6	5	2	6	5	S	6	5	3	6	5	E	-	-	-	-	-	W	-	-	-	-
N	6	5	2	6	5																				
S	6	5	3	6	5																				
E	-	-	-	-	-																				
W	-	-	-	-	-																				

Well done, the Johns and note the above trump trickery.

March 26th There 5 tables.

Online Club Play - Thursdays

March 7th With full results and *all* details of bidding and play available on the website I'll comment on a hand or odd detail that strikes me of interest. My BBO hand of 5th turned out to be no squeeze just a defensive blunder by the robots, which proves they don't keek.

Still trying to reconcile impossible results from Tuesday it was a mauling by Kathleen and Lorna that seared my mind all night.

Dlr: West Vul: All	♠ 5 2 ♥ Q 7 ♦ A 2 ♣ A Q 10 9 6 5 2	Optimum NS +140
♠ J 8 6 ♥ A J 5 ♦ Q 10 6 5 ♣ K 8 7	WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH 4	♠ A Q ♥ K 10 9 8 4 2 ♦ 7 4 3 ♣ 4 3
12 11 9 8	♠ K 10 9 7 4 3 ♥ 6 3 ♦ K J 9 8 ♣ J	♣♦♥♠N N 3 - - 3 - S 3 - - 3 - E - 1 1 - 2 W - - 2 - 2

The bidding was straightforward Kathleen opened 1C I stuck in a fair WJO - OK it would be better headed ♠A10 ♥KQ., but beggars and so on. Lorna with an almost identical suit bid 2S and Ann very properly raised to 3H. Kindly Lorna didn't double but baited the hook and banged out ♣J. It's bound to be wrong, but does it matter? I ducked and Kathleen overtook, cashed ♦A. A ruffing frenzy I had to ruff dummy's ♣K and finished with 7 tricks – it could have been 6. Ouch!

Iain and Carol had similar views in the bidding but were pushed to 4H a let off for 8 tricks. Better lucky....

March 14th

Dlr: North Vul: N/S	♠ 9 6 4 ♥ 8 6 4 3 ♦ 5 4 ♣ K 6 3 2	Optimum NS -420
♠ A 8 3 ♥ 2 ♦ A Q 6 3 2 ♣ A 10 9 8	WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH 21	♠ Q J 7 2 ♥ K Q 10 5 ♦ 9 8 7 ♣ Q J
3 14 11 12	♠ K 10 5 ♥ A J 9 7 ♦ K J 10 ♣ 7 5 4	♣♦♥♠N N - - - - S - - - - E 3 4 2 4 3 W 3 4 2 3 3

Glance at the analysis, it's game for EW in 3NT or 4S. But 3 Souths played in 1NT, 12 HCP and good spot cards. Anything better than down 4 should be good.

West's *best* lead, a club spot card is double dummy, but humans led a diamond to start the slaughter. As dummy I watched Ann escape for down 2 as the defence operated a nice suicide squeeze.

North knows 1NT is doomed but has no means of rescue without a double. The danger with a weak NT vulnerable. After double are you clear where to go? I think it's XX and hope for the best. 2H and that should be double too to lose 800. Oh dear.

March 21st As the results show Richard, in absentio, has found a new way to get to the top.

About the only other thing of interest was what was regarded as suitable to be passed off as a "weak 2 opening". On #6 ♥1085432 with 5+HCP was deemed to comply at 3 tables – see further later.

Dlr: North Vul: E/W	♠ K J 10 ♥ K 9 4 2 ♦ A ♣ Q 8 5 4 3	Optimum NS +400
♠ 9 4 ♥ A J 10 ♦ K J 8 6 5 2 ♣ 6 2	WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH 9	♠ 8 6 5 3 2 ♥ Q 6 3 ♦ 10 3 ♣ K J 7
13 9 6 12	♠ A Q 7 ♥ 8 7 5 ♦ Q 9 7 4 ♣ A 10 9	♣♦♥♠N N 4 - 3 2 3 S 4 - 3 2 3 E - 1 - - - W - 1 - - -

At least with this hand there were no contentious calls. Or were there? North opens 1C and over 1D really can only rebid 1H (unless playing a strong NT when 1NT could be possible but with a singleton?)

All NS pairs ended in NT at 2 or more often 3 level. [The old fashioned auction seems best 1C – 2NT – 3NT.] When played by North ♠3 was harmless; played by South ♦6 lead would create some worries. It looks like a bull and horns hand - you need 4 clubs to go with S-3, D-1 and a hope for ♥K finesse. It works. Glad to have sat this one out.

March 28th As the Director remarked, “We were a select group”.

<p>Dir: East Vul: N/S</p> <p>♠ - - ♥ 7 6 4 ♦ Q 9 6 5 3 ♣ A 9 7 5 2</p> <p>12 6 6 16</p>	<p>♠ 10 9 7 3 ♥ K 3 ♦ A K 8 4 ♣ Q 6 4</p> <p>Optimum NS +2210</p> <p>NORTH WEST 2 EAST SOUTH</p> <p>♠ J 5 2 ♥ J 8 2 ♦ 10 2 ♣ K J 10 8 3</p> <p>♠ A K Q 8 6 4 ♥ A Q 10 9 5 ♦ J 7 ♣ - -</p> <table border="1"> <tr><td>♣</td><td>♦</td><td>♥</td><td>♠</td><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>-</td><td>3</td><td>7</td><td>7</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> </table>	♣	♦	♥	♠	N	-	2	6	7	2	-	3	7	7	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	<p>An Acol 2S for South with 16HCP coming on 20 – the only slight problem would be, are you sure 4H is not the better spot. Every South opened 1S.</p> <p>Every North showed trump support and values some better than others – the choice being 2NT, 3S and 4S.</p> <p>My own choice would be for the first. Suit agreed there is time to explore. 3C would get 3D – just what the Doc ordered. Then 3H (<i>ditto for North</i>) and so 4D. Now 3D can't be a singleton so no losers and 7S. Our opponents bid 6S the rest stopped in game.</p> <p>The case for cue bids rests m'lud.</p>
♣	♦	♥	♠	N																												
-	2	6	7	2																												
-	3	7	7	2																												
-	2	-	-	-																												
-	2	-	-	-																												
-	2	-	-	-																												

Conventions and Cards

Recently I was shown something about the SBU considering banning the use of “Multi 2D” following concerns within the EBU.

Tracking EBU concerns via the “The Death of the Multi” online gave the impression that the concern was over a lack of “full disclosure”. As there several versions of the convention, a simple explanation of “Multi” is not “full disclosure” and that most certainly, an abuse.

There is a similar lack of clarity of disclosure with fashionable of Weak 2s. and WJOs. An explanation of “weak” is woefully inadequate. Or other bids described as “strong” in a system described as Acol and turning out as ♠AKQJ10987 for the 8 playing tricks and nothing, again misleading.

Acol 2's have been unchanged for 80 years. For the upstarts SBU (*Lesson 15 - Student Notes*) **define** these as “opening bids made at the 2 level when holding: i) a 6-card suit in ♦, ♥, or ♠ with ii) a limited HCP range e.g. from 6-10 HCP and a good 6 card suit including 2+ honours in the suit”. Perhaps surprisingly even Robson defines them in the same way “a good 6-card suit with 2 honours with to 5-10 points and defines WJO overcalls in the same way. That's what “weak” as an explanation says.

In the club is the SBU view of a weak 2 or WJO is frequently disregarded and the bids simply described as “weak”. So often that partner expects less than 6HCP, the abuse as the bid is not fully disclosed.

Years ago, most members carried Convention Cards. These acted firstly as quick cribs for the possessors and so were an accurate description of the pair's system. Their use has died out with online play, now replaced by shorthand explanations which are often left inadequate.

Letter from Greece

I spoke to Mike Scully, the secretary at the Tryst bridge club in Falkirk about their post COVID situation. The main points he raised were:

1. All the small clubs in their area have closed, except them and Linlithgow. The Tryst went virtual BBO only for their two main club nights. The Tryst recently introduced a Wed f2f game, where those folks who played in the closed clubs can get a game, but number of tables is small (4-5)

2. He said that the online players have set up their own games, playing on BBO with one or two tables, reported through the club, but not organised by them, if that makes sense.

3. They still have about the same number of tables for Mon (10-12) and Tues 4-5) nights, but all BBO. They get around £250-300 per month from the BBO deal with the SBU.

4. Stirling is the big club in their area and like the big Edinburgh clubs, (New Melville, Carlton) is thriving.

5. Similar story across Scotland and England, for the small clubs. Numbers down 50% f2f or so. No new younger members. Old ones dying off.

6. SBU doing some survey, but not come out with any proposals yet.

7. The Tryst changed their constitution to remove the requirement to return to the SBU any surplus funds to the SBU and agreed to return it to the membership, some years ago.

8. The Tryst are not planning any new initiatives to increase the numbers playing and recognise that they will eventually close.

Editor – The story sounds familiar. And though I much prefer the more social ambience of Realbridge for club tournaments I can see possibilities for afternoon events BBO or Realbridge. I passed Morag a template for a Local Bridge Clubs data for a page on our website as a start of development of John Bryden’s “Umbrella” idea. She like the idea and you may get your arm twisted!

Tournaments Galore

As I said last month partnering a robot can be a disheartening experience. Witness what my provisional results for the (so-called) Acol tournament on 1st March.

Board	Result	Score	Tables	Percentage
1	2HS+1	140	166	87.9
2	4HN-2	-200	161	14.1
3	3NS+3	490	154	80.4
4	4SS-2	-200	138	20.4
5	3NE-3	150	164	97.2
6	3NN-3	-150	153	38.8
7	4SN=	620	139	42.0
8	3DS+1	130	128	91.3
				59.01

also

#2 - I opened and rebid 2NT signed off at 3H – the robot persisted

#4 – A decidedly underweight TO double vulnerable

#6 - Lacking stopper in opponent suit the robot opted for NT

#7 – The inevitable ‘near average’ with a clear game on

Note by the hands had been played between 128 and 166 times compared to 4 or 6 times in the club. These scores are a better measure of performance than the ones in the club! So, even though when partnering a robot it feels like batting in Newbolt’s Vitai Lampada *“A breathless hush in the close tonight. A bumping pitch and a blinding light, An hour to play and the last man in. ...”*. It was the same for 160 others and so just, *“Play up! Play up! And play the game!”*

Other times it’s a benign pitch and good light but then it is too for the 160 others! This is the tournament I propose using as basis for a contest for interested members.

You are usually declarer as you get the “best hand” (*most HCP*) and play when your partner is declarer! But you **can** find a good defence also with a robot see #5!

Try a couple of tournaments to see how you do. Anything from 45% to 60% and you’re “normal” (*my definition*). In that range and I’d bet you’d enjoy the proposed contests, and your card play would improve.

As yet there are no definitive rules of engagement. So, if interested e-mail me – ideas, help for another day, or a S.A. version etc. As I said no takers, no tournament, no sweat. I’ll simply continue and enjoy with my friendly contest.

Free Acol Individual Daylong (MP) - 2024-03-01

Player	Board	Time	Result	Points	Score	Movie	Traveller
Corgi 27 1		13:56	2♥S+1	140	88.91%	Movie	Traveller
Corgi 27 2		13:59	4♥N-2	-200	11.81%	Movie	Traveller
Corgi 27 3		14:02	3NS+3	490	83.73%	Movie	Traveller
Corgi 27 4		14:05	4♠S-2	-200	19.69%	Movie	Traveller
Corgi 27 5		14:07	3NE-3	150	95.89%	Movie	Traveller
Corgi 27 6		14:09	3NN-3	-150	42.77%	Movie	Traveller
Corgi 27 7		14:11	4♠N=	620	44.38%	Movie	Traveller
Corgi 27 8		14:13	3♠S+1	130	92.34%	Movie	Traveller

The next day click "Show Boards" for this. Do I learn anything? For sure. I play too quickly. 8 boards in about 20 minutes, 18 for thinking as the robots take no time – 2 for display of each hand at the end. 30 minutes will be generous. #2 and #4 need examination. Click "Movie" to get the hand for replay or "Traveller" to see what others did.

The hands of the tournament.

1	N North	W N E S
	♠ 943 ♥ J108743 ♦ J10 ♣ 95	P 1♠ 1NT P 2♥ P 2♥ P P P
W West	E East	
♠ 876 ♥ 2 ♦ K6532 ♣ J1032	♠ AQJ5 ♥ K6 ♦ A874 ♣ K76	
S South		
♠ K102 ♥ AQ95 ♦ Q9 ♣ AQ84		2♥ S NS: 0 EW: 0

Will East always open 1S? In East's seat I'd open 1D and everything might be different. But I think NS would still end in 3H. Anyway, the robot's transfer over 1NT overcall has to be correct. There are 2 losers in spades and 2 in diamonds. So, 9 tricks for +140 should be standard. Most got to 3H but failed. You can work out how or whether they misplayed.

2	N North	W N E S
	♠ A5 ♥ K8532 ♦ 1064 ♣ 1043	P 1♥ P 1♠ P 3♦ P 2NT P 4♥ P 3♥ P P
W West	E East	
♠ KJ87 ♥ A76 ♦ 97 ♣ QJ92	♠ 10962 ♥ 94 ♦ KQ532 ♣ 76	
S South		
♠ Q43 ♥ QJ10 ♦ AJ8 ♣ AK85		4♥ N NS: 0 EW: 0

The Robot with 8+ points, responds 1H, but (in my Acol) over 2NT either passes or bids 3NT. And certainly, has no grounds for raising a weak preference to game. There could be 9 tricks but ♦9 lead lets West ruff ♦10 which had been promoted. Robots are sharp defenders. Winners S-1, H-4, D-1 and C-2, for -200 is seldom good. Others were in NT and some escaped for -1 in hearts.

3	N North	W N E S
	♠ AKQJ98 ♥ A93 ♦ 4 ♣ 952	P 1♠ P 1♠ P 2♥ P 2♠ P 3♠ P 3NT P P
W West	E East	
♠ 10764 ♥ 642 ♦ 102 ♣ KQ64	♠ 53 ♥ Q10875 ♦ KQ65 ♣ 83	
S South		
♠ 2 ♥ KJ ♦ AJ9873 ♣ AJ107		3NT S NS: 0 EW: 0

The Robot with 16 points continues over a sign off. North has 7 solid tricks. Is 3S be forcing in Acol? There are 3 top tricks in South's hand, so the contract is no problem. If West attacks with ♣K the suit can be played for 3 winners and 12 tricks. Try for 12 tricks on a diamond lead. Better lucky

<div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">4</div>	N North ♠ Q1054 ♥ 63 ♦ KQJ109 ♣ 104	<table border="1"> <tr><th>W</th><th>N</th><th>E</th><th>S</th></tr> <tr><td>P</td><td>P</td><td>1♣</td><td>P</td></tr> <tr><td>1♥</td><td>X</td><td>2♠</td><td>4♠</td></tr> <tr><td>P</td><td>P</td><td>P</td><td></td></tr> </table>	W	N	E	S	P	P	1♣	P	1♥	X	2♠	4♠	P	P	P	
	W	N	E	S														
	P	P	1♣	P														
1♥	X	2♠	4♠															
P	P	P																
W West ♠ KJ76 ♥ KJ1082 ♦ 742 ♣ 5	E East ♠ A ♥ Q54 ♦ 65 ♣ AJ97632																	
S South ♠ 9832 ♥ A97 ♦ A83 ♣ KQ8	4♠ S NS: 0 EW: 0																	

Does your partner, vulnerable, use a take-out double with just 8HCP - even if it might be squeezed to 10+? With no real shortage in the opponents' suits? Mine don't.

With 4-card support and controls in both the opponents' suits I tried game. Not a success. A *bumpy pitch and ball flew straight to slip.*

<div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">5</div>	N North ♠ Q ♥ J72 ♦ Q9653 ♣ Q1054	<table border="1"> <tr><th>W</th><th>N</th><th>E</th><th>S</th></tr> <tr><td></td><td>P</td><td>1♣</td><td>2♠</td></tr> <tr><td>3♠</td><td>P</td><td>3NT</td><td>P</td></tr> <tr><td>P</td><td>P</td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>	W	N	E	S		P	1♣	2♠	3♠	P	3NT	P	P	P		
	W	N	E	S														
		P	1♣	2♠														
3♠	P	3NT	P															
P	P																	
W West ♠ 9743 ♥ 83 ♦ AK82 ♣ A76	E East ♠ K5 ♥ A964 ♦ 74 ♣ KJ983																	
S South ♠ AJ10862 ♥ KQ105 ♦ J10 ♣ 2	3NT E NS: 0 EW: 0																	

With no support for my overcall partner just left EW to bid what they wished. As to what West's cue bid was supposed to mean your guess is as good as East's.

I led ♠A continued ♠J and was back in at trick 6 to cash 4 spades to win 7 tricks.

<div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">6</div>	N North ♠ KQJ764 ♥ 874 ♦ A106 ♣ 6	<table border="1"> <tr><th>W</th><th>N</th><th>E</th><th>S</th></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td>2♦</td><td>3♣</td></tr> <tr><td>P</td><td>3NT</td><td>P</td><td>P</td></tr> <tr><td>P</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>	W	N	E	S			2♦	3♣	P	3NT	P	P	P			
	W	N	E	S														
			2♦	3♣														
P	3NT	P	P															
P																		
W West ♠ A82 ♥ 10532 ♦ K83 ♣ 1075	E East ♠ 53 ♥ K9 ♦ QJ9754 ♣ A32																	
S South ♠ 109 ♥ AQJ6 ♦ 2 ♣ KQJ984	3NT N NS: 0 EW: 0																	

A weak 2D and a fair overcall and with better than a stopper (?) it was 3NT from partner.

8 tricks are no problem. I tried an early club in the hope the ♣A was with West. No such luck. The *"blinding light and it was leg stump."*

Note the "weak 2D" was correctly explained as "6♦ and 5-10 HCP". Though I would not regard this hand as "weak" with 10HCP (*average after all*) and a fair 6-ard suit. As North, I could have no complaint if 3NT was something of an overbid.

<div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">7</div>	N North ♠ A10954 ♥ Q6 ♦ K10 ♣ K1096	<table border="1"> <tr><th>W</th><th>N</th><th>E</th><th>S</th></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1♥</td></tr> <tr><td>2♦</td><td>2♠</td><td>P</td><td>3♠</td></tr> <tr><td>P</td><td>4♠</td><td>P</td><td>P</td></tr> <tr><td>P</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>	W	N	E	S				1♥	2♦	2♠	P	3♠	P	4♠	P	P	P			
	W	N	E	S																		
				1♥																		
2♦	2♠	P	3♠																			
P	4♠	P	P																			
P																						
W West ♠ J ♥ J10 ♦ QJ9754 ♣ AJ54	E East ♠ 832 ♥ A854 ♦ 862 ♣ Q32																					
S South ♠ KQ76 ♥ K9732 ♦ A3 ♣ 87	4♠ N NS: 0 EW: 0																					

I've opened and shown support and with a decent 14 or so points and that well placed ♦K I can't blame the robot for bidding game. I would too!

With the possibility of S-4, H-1, D-2, C-1 and 2 heart ruffs. I can blame declarer. (*Dummy reversal.*) *Mea culpa.*

It was less annoying when I saw that of the 250 who played, 138 ended up with same result but another 67 did manage just down 1.

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">8</div>	N North ♠ QJ75 ♥ K7 ♦ Q86 ♣ J1092	<table border="1"> <tr><td>W</td><td>N</td><td>E</td><td>S</td></tr> <tr><td>P</td><td>P</td><td>1♠</td><td>2♦</td></tr> <tr><td>P</td><td>2NT</td><td>P</td><td>3♦</td></tr> <tr><td>P</td><td>P</td><td>P</td><td></td></tr> </table>	W	N	E	S	P	P	1♠	2♦	P	2NT	P	3♦	P	P	P	
	W	N	E	S														
	P	P	1♠	2♦														
	P	2NT	P	3♦														
P	P	P																
W West ♠ A9 ♥ 65432 ♦ 943 ♣ K87	E East ♠ K108432 ♥ AQJ10 ♦ 5 ♣ 64																	
S South ♠ 6 ♥ 98 ♦ AKJ1072 ♣ AQ53	3♦ S NS: 0 EW: 0																	

The robot showed some strength and a stopper in spades – which seems fair. Mind you 3NT by North might not be so rosy on ♣4 lead to ♠A, and a switch to ♥3! 5 tricks and counting. Probably just South’s 6 top tricks for declarer.

Fortunately, my robot accepted 3D as a sign off and passed. 3NT could be difficult to avoid and make!

4 declarers were doubled in 4D and 1 made 3NT and they all did better.

I can't guarantee every set of boards will be as instructive as these. But you can always check for errors and **improve** your card play. A local competition should keep your mind on the cards, not dwelling on the robots. It's not them you are playing against! I'll trial April 20th and 27th for any interested. We can discuss any conditions for a start in May – the only one I foresee is for non-appearance. Give me an e-mail and the tournaments a go.

As I said this kind of local contest could be arranged for “no bidding” tournaments – IMP (*good*) or MP (*very tricky*) or Standard American bidders.

I don't expect my inbox to be flooded but if you fancy a contest.....

BBO Column

5th February

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">8</div>	N North ♠ J10 ♥ AJ76 ♦ A72 ♣ K976	<table border="1"> <tr><td>W</td><td>N</td><td>E</td><td>S</td></tr> <tr><td>P</td><td>1NT</td><td>P</td><td>6NT</td></tr> <tr><td>P</td><td>P</td><td>P</td><td></td></tr> </table>	W	N	E	S	P	1NT	P	6NT	P	P	P	
	W	N	E	S										
	P	1NT	P	6NT										
	P	P	P											
W West ♠ K972 ♥ 953 ♦ J105 ♣ J102	E East ♠ 8654 ♥ 8 ♦ Q93 ♣ Q8543													
S South ♠ AQ3 ♥ KQ1042 ♦ K864 ♣ A	6NT N NS: 0 EW: 0													

East leads S4. As North and declarer you opt to duck - there are always 2 tricks. West wins SK and leads S2. You win SQ and take stock. You have 11 top tricks, S-2, H-5, D-2 and C-2.

Only the minors can provide an additional trick and realistically they can't C9 and D8 are not menaces against either defender. The robots simply misdefended.

Puzzle Hand 3

<p>You are South in 7H. West leads ♣K.</p>	<table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> ♠ KJ1086 ♥ 5432 ♦ - ♣ KQJ10 </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> ♠ AQ7 ♥ AKQJ ♦ QJ10987 ♣ - <table border="1" style="margin: 10px auto; text-align: center;"> <tr><td>W</td><td>North</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td>e</td><td>3</td><td>a</td></tr> <tr><td>s</td><td></td><td>s</td></tr> <tr><td>t</td><td>South</td><td>t</td></tr> </table> ♠ - ♥ 109876 ♦ AK ♣ A98765 </td> </tr> </table>	♠ KJ1086 ♥ 5432 ♦ - ♣ KQJ10	♠ AQ7 ♥ AKQJ ♦ QJ10987 ♣ - <table border="1" style="margin: 10px auto; text-align: center;"> <tr><td>W</td><td>North</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td>e</td><td>3</td><td>a</td></tr> <tr><td>s</td><td></td><td>s</td></tr> <tr><td>t</td><td>South</td><td>t</td></tr> </table> ♠ - ♥ 109876 ♦ AK ♣ A98765	W	North	E	e	3	a	s		s	t	South	t
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e	3	a													
s		s													
t	South	t													