



JUNE 2019 NEWSLETTER



THE HELP FOR US ISSUE

Nearly all of this issue of our Newsletter is devoted to helping us all improve our bridge game.

Beginning on the second page is an article by Jay Jacobs about the various strategies and tactics you can use to improve your matchpoint results.

Greg Roberts is starting a series of articles about how to become a better bridge player. Part 1 of the series starts on the fifth page.

But, Ron, you didn't number the pages! Well, that's very true. Since the Newsletter was only ever supposed to be two pages long, I never learned how to do that. So, you'll kinda have to work it out on your own.

Yeah, there's some other stuff too.

THE LONGEST DAY

We are pleased to once again participate in The Longest Day, the Alzheimer's Association's major yearly fundraiser. Our Longest Day game will be held on Friday, June 21st. The card fee for this game will be \$5.00. In addition, we will have a silent auction of items donated by members and a donation basket available for those choosing to make a contribution toward finding a cure for Alzheimer's. If you would like to donate by a check payable to the Alzheimer's Association, put it in the basket of give it to any Board member and you will receive a receipt directly from the Association. All cash donations, auction proceeds, and card fees will be given to the fight against this hideous disease.

GAMES IN JUNE

Just a quick summary of what's going on in the world of games. Pro Basketball – just another month or so until the Steph Curry/Kevin Durant juggernaut (aka the Golden State Warriors) win yet another title.

Pro Hockey – well, after the elimination of the best team (my Tampa Bay Lightning) in the first playoff round, looks like the Boston Bruins to me. How awful, got tired of the Patriots and the Red Sox, and now the Bruins too. OK, time to move on ... oops, forgot about Baseball (easy to do) ... so, what's going on there? The usual – nothing.

So what's going on at your club? Qualification for the ACBL North American Pairs, one of the league's grass roots events, begins in June. Members who qualify at the club level are eligible to play in our District finals and, if successful, move on to the National level. These games award half red/half black points at 82% Sectional Rating. We will hold six of those games in June. In addition, there will be three Club Championships, and two Charity Games. Other games of interest:

Dirty Dozen Team Game – Friday, June 14th – Dirty Dozen handicapped format.

Longest Day – Friday, June 21st – Annual Alzheimer's Association Foundation fundraiser.

Game Schedule - July 2019

Monday 1:30pm	Wednesday 1:30pm	Friday 1:30pm
3-Jun Open Pairs#	5-Jun Open Pairs\$	7-Jun Open Pairs\$
10-Jun Open Pairs&	12-Jun Open Pairs&	14-Jun Dirty Dozen Teams Handicapped#
17-Jun Open Pairs\$	19-Jun Open Pairs\$	21-Jun Longest Day
24-Jun Open Pairs\$	26-Jun Open Pairs#	28-Jun Open Pairs\$
\$ = NAP Qualifier & = Charity Game		# = Club Championship

DUPLICATE STRATEGY

BY JAY JACOBS

Duplicate scoring is ordinal, rather than cardinal. Thus, getting more points is not as important as beating the scores of the other people. Unlike rubber bridge, scores are compared to the people holding the same cards as you. You get 1 match point for each pair you beat and $\frac{1}{2}$ match point for each one you tie. If 6 pairs play a board, top on a board is 5 and average is $2\frac{1}{2}$. If 7 pairs play, top is 6 and average is 3. It does not matter by how much you beat other pairs – 10 points counts the same as 500 or 2,000 points (since scoring is ordinal).

If you are in a good contract that the field will not be in, play it safe. (For example, [1] you are in a game or slam you don't think will be bid elsewhere or [2] you are in a better suit [or no trump] vs. what the field will be in or [3] you are in a part score, having avoided an unmakeable game.) If you are in an inferior contract, stretch for overtricks (including perhaps risking your contract) if that will get you closer to the field. If you are in a bad contract, do your best to hold down losers. If the opponents are in a terrible contract, don't double them to alert them to look elsewhere. You are probably headed for a good board and won't make it any better by doubling (a top is a top). Remember, it only matters how you do against the other people holding your cards – specific results do not matter in and of themselves.

It can be effective to sacrifice against the opponents. If they can make 4 spades (420 not vulnerable, 620 vulnerable) and you can go down by less, then you get a good board. But, beware of phantom saves – they can't make the game and you go down anyway.

Part-scores are generally where the most match points are made in a duplicate session. It is often a tough call whether to compete at the 3 level or let the opponents play there. For example, not vulnerable, you can afford to go down two (= -100) against the opponents 2 or 3 level part score other than 2 of a minor, which is only -90 (2 H or S = 3 C or D = -110) but you can only afford to go down 1 vulnerable, because down 2 would be -200. Sometimes, the best scores can be made by doubling opponents who are competing, although you risk the chance of doubling them in to game. (Note that 2 C or 2 D making doubled is not game – $[20+20] \times 2 = 80 + 50$ for part score and 50 for doubled contract = 180.)

Although games and slams have bigger points, the field will often be doing substantially the same thing and the swings come from which game or slam you are in (level and suit), declarer play, and defense. At higher levels, swings are more likely to occur based on additional overtricks or undertricks, or placement of the contract (no-trump gives extra points but a trump suit may be safer; majors give more points than minors). Consequently, duplicate bidding systems are oriented toward maximizing contract placement, making declare vs. defend decisions, and knowing when to double. If you are in a game or slam when everyone else will probably be in less, take no chances since you are headed for a good result. If you are in a lower contract when the field will be in the higher one, make sure you make your bid since [1] some others will not bid it and/or [2] there may be a bad break and some will go down, so it is important to have a positive score.

General principles:

- ❑ Point count bidding tends to undervalue aces and tens and overvalue quacks (queens and jacks)
- ❑ Generally, you need 25+ points for game and 30+ points for slam – obviously, distribution can change this
- ❑ A new suit by an unpassed hand is forcing for one round
- ❑ Cue bids of the opponents suit are forcing for one round

- ❑ Reverse bids are forcing at least for one round, usually at least to the 3 level, and generally to game
- ❑ When one hand has been defined and the other has not, captaincy rests with the undefined hand – that hand sets the final contract
- ❑ The 4 level in a minor (usually) belongs to the opponents
- ❑ When the opponents are playing in an obvious misfit, it is often good to lead trump at each opportunity to cut down on a cross-ruff or using dummy's short trump to ruff another short suit
- ❑ When you hold a lot of low trump that has nuisance value but probably will not take tricks, it is often better to lead trump than try for a ruff
- ❑ Trump leads from 2 or 3 small are often preferable to leading from an honor or having to break a (new) suit
- ❑ A lead of a small card generally means an honor and the lead of an intermediate card (10, 9, 8, 7 or 6) generally denies an honor – but, be careful about wasting 10s and 9s which may later become valuable
- ❑ The lead of a Q in NT asks partner to drop his highest card in that suit – this is generally done because leader has K Q 10 9 or some similar holding and needs to locate the jack
- ❑ In NT, lead A from A K – in suits, lead K from A K only with a doubleton, although some play the reverse
- ❑ The opponents should not generally play at the 2 level in a contested auction – you should go to 3, double them, or force them to 3 (that's why spades is such a valuable suit, since it controls at each level)
- ❑ In contested auctions where the points are approximately equally divided between the two sides, you can usually make 2 if you have 8 trumps between you and 3 if you have 9 trumps (= law of total tricks)
- ❑ With 6-5 distribution and some points in your suits, start bidding suits and make sure you show both – if you keep repeating the 6 card suit, you may find partner with 1 or 2 in that suit and a possible 5-3 or better fit in the other suit goes undiscovered (6-5, come alive)
- ❑ Consider the “rule of 20” for opening bids – open if your high card points (no distribution) plus the number of cards in your two longest suits add to 20 or higher
- ❑ When you have wild distribution, others probably do also – be wary of making doubles because your aces and kings may be facing opponents' singletons or voids
- ❑ Do not preempt over a preemptive bid by opponents
- ❑ Consider whether you should “balance” the bidding when the opponents stop at the two level in an uncontested auction – a balancing bid is done in the pass-out position and can be a new suit (perhaps for an opening lead), repeating another suit, or a re-opening double
- ❑ Distribution is more important than points

- ❑ Generally it is better to play in an equal length fit (4-4 or 5-5) and use an unequal fit (5-3, 5-4, etc) for pitches, which would not be available if the unbalanced suit was trump; however, 6-3 and 7-2 fits usually should be the trump suit, especially when you have a lot of them, because you risk an opponent trumping the suit
- ❑ Once you have made a pre-emptive bid, do not bid again unless partner makes a forcing bid
- ❑ Once partner has made a pre-emptive bid, you are on your own as to competing – expect nothing from partner, who should pass any bid you make (including high level doubles), unless it is clearly forcing
- ❑ When you have 5-5, 6-5, 7-4 or other very unbalanced distribution, it is rarely advantageous to double or cue bid – just start bidding your suits. One exception to this is bids that convey two-suited hands so that partner knows at least one of your suits. The risk is that the bidding can get very high very quickly and you may never get a chance to show your second suit or your distribution. Obviously, depending on your strength, you may need to have forcing bids available so that partner does not pass at too low a level. Also, if partner doubles the opponents, unless you have clearly conveyed your distribution and strength to partner, you should seriously consider pulling the double, as you will not provide the expected defensive tricks (you may lack high cards and the opponents will likely be short in your suit).
- ❑ When it is clear the opponents are sacrificing and you have a makeable contract, they should not play undoubled – the general rule is that when the opponents sacrifice over your freely bid game, you must either go up to the next level or double them (yes, there will be times when they make the double and there will be times when you bid on and go down, but this is the percentage call)
- ❑ Don't pull partner's high-level doubles unless [1] they are takeout or [2] your hand is considerably different from what partner thinks it is and you have no defensive values or considerable offensive values in your suits or [3] the opponents are sacrificing and you are looking for a higher contract
- ❑ It is rarely a good idea to redouble for penalties – if you are making a doubled contract, you will have a good board – when you redouble, the opponents may get nervous and run – your double of their contract may not yield as much as their double of your making contract would have – and, your double may get them to run into a better contract
- ❑ Doubles of slams and, occasionally, 3 NT, call for an unusual lead – generally that would be [1] other than your previously bid suit (it's weak), [2] the first bid suit by dummy (whether or not natural = I have ace or KQ behind them or I am void and can trump the opening lead), or [3] figure it out because the right opening lead may set the contract. This is called a "Lightner double". Failure to make such a double has its own implications. Of course, if you can set the contract in hand and you double, you may get an unusual lead. Lightner doubles are most often used in non-competitive auctions.
- ❑ When the opponents have fixed you, stay fixed. The alternative is rarely better.
- ❑ It's a bidders game

BECOMING A BETTER PLAYER -- PART I

BY GREG ROBERTS

Becoming a better bridge player is not easy since there are no shortcuts. Granted, some of us are born with better computational skills or can concentrate better than others, but all of us can read bridge articles or books and practice to get better, regardless of our natural endowments.

I can't remember how I felt when I bid and made a game for the first time, but I am sure that it was a thrill and that I was proud of my accomplishment. No doubt you have taken pride over some play or bid that you made that led to a good result. The goal for each one of us should be to make plays or bids that are beyond the beginner level and to enjoy those stratagems even more than simply taking a finesse and having it work.

Remember to not beat yourself up over a bad bid or play: no one gets every hand right. Bridge can be a game of guilt, so get better so you will feel guilty less often.

If you want to get better, here are three disciplines that you should strive to develop:

- **Concentration** - In the end, this is the sine qua non of a good bridge player. You may have mastered every bidding convention, fully digested books on bidding, declarer techniques and defense, but if you cannot apply that knowledge by concentrating on every hand, you will never be as good a player as you could be.

I have been playing bridge competitively for 60+ years and have competed, not always successfully, at the national level against the best players in the world. So, I should know what play or bid to make at a given moment. The question is: why do I make errors? The answer is: I failed to concentrate at the time. I either bid or played impetuously and did not give the situation enough thought.

Granted, one's skill level may not be high enough to "get it right" in many situations, but all of us are guilty of "messing up" bids or plays when, if we had concentrated more, we would have gotten right.

- **Counting** - Bridge is a simple game in some respects. The parameters do not change: 52 cards, 4 suits, 13 cards in a suit. If you know that an opponent had 6 cards in one suit, he can then only have 7 "spaces" for other cards. And yes, memory is vitally important, since you must remember what cards have been played so you can figure out what is left to be played.

If your memory is not so good, there are techniques you can use to improve your ability to remember. As an example, if I gave you this number, 7564390299, it might be tough, but if you were to group the numbers into "blocks" of 4-3-3, it would be easier to remember: 7564,390,299. So, the bridge application is to remember blocks of tricks. In my experience the best way to do this is to group the tricks into four blocks: the first four, the 2nd three, the 3rd three and the 4th three. In this way, I can think back to the 5th-7th tricks and remember what was played.

Another very useful way to better remember who played what is to pay special note when someone shows out in a suit. If partner followed once to a suit, and you and the dummy had a combined 5 cards in the suit, then you know that declarer started with 6 cards in that suit. Remember to stop and take stock during the play when someone shows out. Regardless of whether you are declaring or defending, when someone shows out, you know how many cards in that suit were originally in all four hands.

Another way to give yourself a head start on remembering the cards during the play is to make an initial assessment of the opponents' distribution after the bidding has been completed, but before the opening lead has been made.

Consider this bidding sequence:

West	North	East	South
1♠	Pass	2♦	Pass
2NT	Pass	4♠	All Pass

I would guess that West's distribution was 5-3-2-3, and that East had 5 diamonds and at least 3 spades. When the dummy is tabled, I know East's exact distribution, and during the play of the hand, I can make refinements of West's distribution based on the cards that have played to any point in the hand.

As declarer you try to count the opponents' distribution, the opponents' high card strength, and the number of tricks you can take and the number of tricks the opponents can take at any given moment in the hand.

You can use the bidding to help you out. Say you are the declarer at 3♥, and your left-hand opponent opened 1♠ and your right-hand opponent had bid 2♠. If there are five spades in your hand and the dummy, then you can credit West with five spades. Remember that you only had to count one of the opponent's hand, not both. When you have a count on one hand, you have a count on the other, and when you have a count on three suits, you have a count on the fourth.

Preempts can give you a wonderful head start on counting. If an opponent has opened with a weak two bid, you can place him with 6 in that suit. If he has opened with three of a major, he will usually have 7 cards in that suit.

Sometimes you will be able to infer the count of a suit, particularly a major suit, based on not just what they bid, but also on what they did not bid. Say the bidding goes:

West	North	East	South
1♦	pass	1♠	2♣
Pass	3♣		

Assume that the A of ♦ is led and the dummy has the J10 of ♥ and you have the Q43 of ♥. Hum-m-m. If one of the opponents had 5 hearts, the suit would have been bid, so the hearts must be 4-4. Moreover, you now know 9 cards in East's hand. Easy, huh?

Say West opens 1♣ and East bids 1♠. You bid 3♦, ending the auction. If a spade is led and East turns up with 4 spades, then you can infer that he does not have 4 hearts, since he would have responded 1 heart instead of 1 spade.

In a similar vein, if a player opens the bidding 1♣, you "know" that he does not have a balanced hand with 15-17 high card points. Similarly, if a player does not open the bidding, he does not have 12 high card points; if a player does not respond to his partner's opening bid after RHO passes, then he does not have at least 6 points.

If you need to locate a queen in a suit, and your left hand opponent has shown up with 11 points at this point in the hand, then the odds are quite good that he does not have that queen.

Basic knowledge of proper bidding and play of the cards - this attribute is the easiest to improve, since all we need to do is read good bridge articles and books and ask players you respect what they would have done in a specific situation. If you are polite and ask a good player a question, he or she will almost always answer you, since by the mere fact of your asking the question, you are tacitly stating that you respect that player's opinion.

As members of the ACBL, we receive a wonderful teaching resource every month in the mail: The Bridge Bulletin. When was the last time you read and comprehended every article in a given issue? I know—never. Bridge articles are to be savored: read and re-read until you have mastered the subject matter.

Here is list of my recommendations for your bridge library:

“How to Play a Bridge Hand”, by Bill Root \$13.78 at Amazon

“Introduction to Defender’s Play” by Edwin Kantar \$12.61 at Amazon

“Two over one Game Force” by Max Hardy \$19.36 at Amazon

Next month we will discuss competitive bidding.

BOARD MEETING REPORT

The latest meeting of your Board was held on May 8th, 2019. Following is a very brief summary of the meeting.

Treasurer’s Report – Mike reported that for the four months ending in April, the Club ran a surplus of about \$3000. This is because the first quarter of the year is when our table count is the highest and our expenses are the lowest.

The Longest Day – our Club will participate in the annual Alzheimer’s Foundation fundraiser on Friday, June 21st. Alan Brooks is taking the lead in running this event with Lauren and Sedley coordinating the food arrangements. We will contribute all proceeds from this event to the Foundation.

Sectional Tournament – there have been a few changes to our Sectional Committee. While Greg is still the Tournament Chairperson, Phoebe is now in charge of food and beverage and Barb has agreed to handle partnerships. Mike Morrow is once again on board to cater our Sunday Swiss Team lunch. Additional volunteers will be needed in the future.

Sunshine (aka Greeting Card) Person – Phyllis P has volunteered to take on this function.

Party Program – Lauren and Sedley will put together our summer party for sometime in July. Theme and date to be determined.

Half Table Procedure – in an attempt to encourage more players to sit East/West, North/South will be the sit-out direction for all half table games unless the Director, at his sole discretion, wants to use the half table to balance the field.

Yet Even More From the Guy in Wallingford



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Questions from Ron: *That phrase appears in many legal documents. Does it make the slightest bit of sense to anyone? Or is it just me?*

Oh, now I see. If it's used in legal documents, it's not supposed to make sense.