



JULY 2019 NEWSLETTER



HELP FOR AND FROM US ISSUE

On the help for us front we have:

Beginning on the third page an article by Jay Jacobs about the various strategies and tactics you can use to improve your team game results.

Beginning on the fifth page is Part 2 of Greg Roberts' series on becoming a better bridge player. As promised, it discusses competitive bidding.

The help from us is about our very successful Longest Day Alzheimer's fundraiser and can be found on the second page.

No, I still have not figured out how to number the pages, so you'll just have to keep working it out on your own.

All is also good at your club since July has all kinds of different games. Qualification for the ACBL North American Pairs, one of the league's grass roots events, continues in July. We will offer six more of these games which award half red/half black points. In addition, there will be three Charity Games and two Club Championship. Other games of interest:

ACBL – Wide Instant Matchpoint Game – Monday, July 8th – See page 2 for an explanation of this game.

Dirty Dozen Team Game – Friday, July 12th – Dirty Dozen handicapped format.

Unit Charity Game – Friday, July 26th – Don't really know or care what this is, but it awards additional masterpoints, so here it is.

Pro – Am Pairs – Wednesday, July 31st – I think we all know what this is. Even though no one pays the slightest bit of attention to it, there will be a sign up sheet. It's also a Club Championship Game. Special Game Card Fee for members -- \$1.00.

GAMES IN JULY

The Pro playoff games are over and as I boldly and brilliantly prophesized, the Toronto Raptors are your newly crowned NBA Champions and the St. Louis Blues have won hockey's Stanley Cup. But ... but ... Ron, you picked the Golden State Warriors and the Boston Bruins. NO, NO, NO ... FAKE NEWS ... FAKE NEWS!

Speaking of fake news, traditionally the POTUS honors these champions by inviting them to a reception at the White House. Had the Warriors won, they would have, once again, refused the invitation and the POTUS would have, once again, uninvited them. So, at least we are spared that nonsense. However, the Raptors present another problem. They are not from within our borders and thus may not be welcome in the eyes of The Donald. Oh, wait, it's OK – they are all rich and don't speak Spanish. Well, what about the hockey players, many of whom are also foreigners. Well, they're just a bunch of rich white guys – even better. So, all is good in Dump Trumpster Nation.

Game Schedule - July 2019

Monday 1:30pm	Wednesday 1:30pm	Friday 1:30pm
1-Jul Open Pairs\$	3-Jul Open Pairs\$	5-Jul Open Pairs\$
8-Jul ACBL - Wide Instant MP Game	10-Jul Open Pairs	12-Jul Dirty Dozen Teams Handicapped&
15-Jul Open Pairs&	17-Jul Open Pairs\$	19-Jul Open Pairs\$
22-Jul Open Pairs\$	24-Jul Open Pairs&	26-Jul Open Pairs%
29-Jul Open Pairs#	31-Jul Pro-Am Pairs#	

\$ = NAP Qualifier & = Charity Game # = Club Champ % = Unit Game

WOW

You guys really stepped up to the plate (sorry, but just gotta have a reference to America's favorite wastetime somewhere in the newsletter) to join the fight against Alzheimer's. On Friday, June 21, we participated in the Longest Day, the major annual fundraiser for the Alzheimer's Association. We drew 16 tables (versus 12.5 last year).

In addition to the bridge game, there was a silent auction and numerous special treats brought in by members for our enjoyment. All proceeds from card fees and the silent auction, plus your generous donations are going to the Alzheimer's Foundation to continue the fight against this hideous disease. The total amount raised, which was well over double what we have ever raised in the past, was

\$ 2,954

Big thanks to the local merchants that donated gift certificates for our silent auction. They are, in no particular order, Woodside Plantation Country Club, Houndslake Country Club, Pedego Electric Bikes, Cumberland Village, O'Charley's, Roma's and the Wilcox. Thanks also to our members who contributed items for our auction; Phillip Mixon, Sara Wampole, Phyllis Pellarin, Alan Brooks, Tom Supensky, Maryanne Ebert, and Dorothy Johnson.

Thanks to all who made a monetary contribution to the cause and a special shout out to Maryanne Ebert for matching the total donations from all our other members.

And finally, accolades to Alan Brooks who made this whole thing possible. He was our team captain this year and was responsible for coordinating and running the event. To say he did a magnificent job is a gross underbid.

Thank you all for participation and support to make this special event special. It makes me proud to be a member of the Aiken Bridge Club.

INSTANT MATCHPOINT GAME

On **Monday, July 8th**, we will be participating in the **Summer ACBL - Wide Instant Matchpoint Game**.

So, what is it? Well, it's pretty much your basic garden variety ACBL matchpoint pairs game with a few very nice enhancements.

Instant Results -- after you play a board, you will know your result instantly. How? There will be a traveler (like in the days before Bridgemates) in each board, which, upon opening, will reveal your percentage score on that board. When you see your result, please refrain from gloating, shaming or broadcasting your score to the rest of the room.

Gold Points – you can earn one gold point for finishing at the top of your section.

Expert Analysis -- there will be a full written analysis of all the deals plus a special video discussing the hands available for viewing on the ACBL web site. This should obviate the need for some of us to pontificate about and discuss the hands at the table. Why? Because the analyses will cover all that, and was written by folks who actually know what they're doing.

TEAM GAME STRATEGY

BY JAY JACOBS

Team game scoring is cardinal, rather than ordinal (which is used in duplicate bridge). Thus, getting more points is of primary importance. Team games are similar to duplicate in that you are comparing against others who hold the same cards (vs. rubber bridge where each hand is independent). However, unlike duplicate, actual scores count, not how many people you beat, since you are only playing one opponent.

If you are in a good contract that the opponents at the other table are unlikely to be in, play it safe. (For example, [1] you are in a game or slam you don't think the opponents at the other table will bid or [2] you are in a better suit [or no trump] vs. what the opponents will be in, or [3] you are in a part score, having avoided an unmakeable game.) Overtricks, while nice, will generally not make much of a difference in IMPs. Thus, take safety plays when available. Do not jeopardize your contract for overtricks (a strategy sometimes appropriate in duplicate). If you are in an inferior contract, minimize your losses. If the opponents are in a terrible contract, don't double them to alert them how to play the hand or to look to improve their contract elsewhere, unless you are sure there is no elsewhere. You are probably headed for a good result anyway. Redoubles to play are generally a bad idea, since they can swing the whole match. Therefore, you might want to consider any redouble as SOS, unless clearly it is to punish the opponents. Similarly, think long and hard before you leave in a redouble by the opponents. Remember, it only matters how you and your partners do against the opponents – there is no larger field.

While sacrifices in duplicate are often a good strategy, sacrifices in team games are generally not a good idea. You may be taking a phantom sacrifice (you go down and they can't make anything). Or, you may be giving them a no-lose situation – they can choose between their game and your sacrifice doubled. Saving 20, 50, or even 100 points, while good a duplicate, is not a lot of IMPs, and that's only if it works. If you otherwise go down and they have no makeable contract, you will have a double minus (a loss at each table) and that can lead to a loss of significant IMPs.

When there is a choice between bidding a game and not, consider the point differentials involved. If we are not vulnerable and bid and make 4 spades, we get +420 (300 for the game and 120 for the tricks). If we only bid 1, 2, or 3 spades and make 4, we get +170 (50 for the part score and 120 for the tricks). The game bonus makes it worthwhile to take the push. Let's take a simple example. Assume there is a 50% chance of making 4 spades and a 50% chance of making 3 spades. If we bid 3 spades, we get either +140 or +170, depending on how many tricks we take. Since either possibility has a 50% chance, the expected value (i.e., expected long term average) would be +155 ($.5 \times 140 + .5 \times 170$). Another way of looking at it is half the time we get 140 and half the time we get 170, so on average, we get 155 ($[(140+170)/2]$). If we bid 4 and make it, we get +420, and if we go down 1, we get -50. The expected value here is +185 ($.5 \times 420 + .5 \times -50$, or $[420-50]/2$). Note that you can never score +185 or +155 – they represent the long-term averages. Since 185 exceeds 155, in the long run we will be better off bidding the game, even though we go down half the time. Since our opponents presumably also know this, they will likely be bidding game every time also, which means you will lose big when the contract makes 4 (170 vs. 420), and win by less when it only makes 3 and you didn't bid 4, but they did (140 vs. -50). Note the difference in the first case is +250 points and in the second is +190 – you still come out ahead by bidding the game. If you are vulnerable, the numbers become larger, replacing +420 with +620, and -50 with -100. Running the math again, the expected value for making 4 is +395 ($.5 \times 170 + .5 \times 620$), while the expected value of making only 3 is +20 ($.5 \times 140 + .5 \times -100$). Soooo, when you are vulnerable, you need to stretch for anything looking like a makeable game, even to the point where you bid less than 50% games. At 40%, for example, the expected value of bidding a game would be 188 ($.4 \times 620 + .6 \times -100$) and the expected value of bidding a part score would be 152 ($.4 \times 170 + .6 \times 140$). The actual break-even point is probably closer to 35%. Note that the above reasoning may be helpful in duplicate, but since the scoring is based on how many people you beat, not on your absolute score, you may take fewer chances in duplicate in this area.

You can follow a similar analysis for bidding slams. Going down costs not only the slam bonus, but also the game bonus, and you wind up with a negative score. While I encourage you to do the math, the bottom line is that you should have a 50% or higher chance of making the slam or you shouldn't bid it. Likewise, do not bid a grand slam unless you can count 13 tricks. This analysis does not necessarily apply to duplicate, for the simple reason that in duplicate you are talking about one board out of 24 to 28 boards. But, in teams, you are talking about a big swing in IMPs in a 6 to 8 board match – often one that cannot be overcome.

Let's also talk about doubling. If you double the opponents into game and they make it, you have turned a part score into a game. The potential extra 50 or 100 points for setting them is not worth the risk. And, we haven't even talked about the extra points for doubled tricks and the bonus for making a doubled contract. This does not mean you should not double hopeless contracts that will go down zillions of points, but you should be very careful about close contracts. Remember, in team games, one really bad board can swing a match (as opposed to duplicate where one bad board is less than 5% of the boards you play and lacks any spillover).

Your thinking about part score contracts should also be different vis-à-vis duplicate. The most important thing is to get a positive score, either by making a partial yourself or setting the opponents. Do not go higher and go down when there is a good chance they will not make their contract. Consequently, by extension, the 3 level belongs to the opponents, *if they are vulnerable*, as well as the 4 level in a minor. Again, the reasoning is that +100 for setting them differs little from +110 or +140 for making a contract (remember, the difference is based on IMPs, not how many people you beat). And, sometimes, you might get lucky and beat them +200. The other side of this coin is not to take chances when you are vulnerable. Try to stay at the 2 level. If you go to the 3 level, be fairly certain you can make it, vs. trying to steal the bid or pushing the opponents higher (unless you know they will take the push).

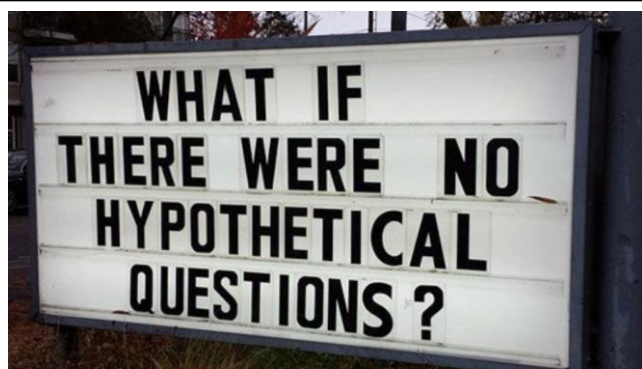
So, where do most big swings occur? Here are common situations:

1. One sides bids and makes game / slam, while the other does not
2. There is a double swing – one team has a plus score at each table (even without a game, two plus scores generate several IMPs).

And, remember, you don't want the match to hang on one board if you can avoid it. Cumulative IMPs across all boards wins the day.

Of course, there is no rule that lacks an exception. If you are behind in the match, or you need a good result for the round, or you feel you are hopelessly outmatched, you may want to take some chances – after all, the difference between losing by 20 IMPs vs. 30 IMPs is not all that great, and sometimes you get lucky.

Ponderables From The Guy In Wallingford



BECOMING A BETTER PLAYER -- PART 2

COMPETITIVE BIDDING

BY GREG ROBERTS

Bridge probabilities tell us that if you play 26 hands in a session, you and your partner will hold 26 or more high card points only three hands on average. Since game may often be bid and made with 25 combined points, it is safe to say that over 80% of the hands that we will encounter in a session will not produce a lay down game. In other words, both partners have values and the final contract is usually up for grabs.

Given those facts, it seems clear that mastering competitive bidding is vitally important for the advancing bridge player. Whether you open the bidding or enter the bidding as an over caller or one making a takeout double, it is important to remember that there are only three reasons to bid: (1) you have sufficient high card strength to bid; (2) you have attractive distribution; (3) you have a good suit, and longer is better. In short, you bid because you have trick taking ability.

Consider the trick taking potential of these two hands:

♠A234	♠KQJ10987
♥A23	♥23
♦A23	♦23
♣A23	♣23

The first hand containing 4 aces and 16 high card points will take 4 tricks most certainly at a NT contract, while the second hand only contains 6 high card point but will take 6 tricks at a spade contract. Admittedly, this is a simplistic example, but the point to be made is that strong suits are undervalued by using simply high card points to evaluate a hand.

If you or your partner has opened the bidding, it is often easier for you to bid competitively than if you overcall. However, there are very good reasons to overcall: first, you can obstruct the opponents' bidding, causing them to lose their best suit or possibly misjudge the trick taking potential of their combined hands. So, when should one overcall?

When you are not vulnerable, you can overcall with a good 10 point hand that has a good suit. What is a good suit, you ask? AKJxx, KQJxx, KQ109x, QJ1098, AJ109x, AQJxx.

At the two level, dangers lurk, particularly if your partner is a passed hand. You should have at least 12 high cards points with an excellent five or a good six card suit. Do not overcall just because you have an opening hand with a bad suit -- that is an avenue to disaster. Recently, one of our players overcalled 2 clubs not vulnerable over a one diamond opening bid with ♠KJx ♥Kxx ♦Qx ♣A8732 and she went for 500, when I held the KQ1096 of clubs and the King of diamonds. I passed her bid and partner, being short in clubs re-opened with a double and she paid for her indiscretion. A better bid by her would have been a takeout double, which we will discuss shortly.

Here are things to consider when overcalling: first, the quality of your suit. I would certainly overcall one spade with KQJxx and nothing else after a minor opening on my right. Spot cards in your suit are vital. Distribution is important and balanced hands are not good for a suit contract unless you have extra values.

When you are vulnerable, it is never a good idea to overcall with a bad suit. Ideally you need a great five card suit, at a minimum.

Takeout Doubles

This is the most popular convention in use today. When I started playing the late 50's, most doubles were for penalties and competitive bidding was hit or miss. No one player is credited with the development of this

convention, but it was popularized by the Bridge World magazine.

What are the requirements for a takeout double? The first type of double shows the equivalent of opening bid values with support for any of the other 3 suits (usually, at least 3 cards in each suit. The second type is a hand with 18+ points of playing strength and any distribution.

So, when is a double for takeout and when is a double for penalties? If the opponents have opened the bidding and your partner doubles immediately, obviously that double is for takeout. If RHO opens 1♥, and you double and LHO bids 2♥, and you double again, that double is still for takeout, and if LHO continues with 3♥, and you double again, that double is also still for takeout. The general rule is that if your opponent opens the bidding and partner makes an immediate or delayed double, until you make a bid other than pass, any subsequent doubles by partner are for takeout. Obviously, good judgment plays a role if the opponent bid game over your partner's takeout double

Remember that the upper limit for an overcall is around 17 playing points, so if you have more than 17 points with a single suited hand you should double first and then bid your suit. As an example: ♠AKQxxx ♥x ♦AJx ♣Kxx. I would double an opening bid of one heart and then bid spades.

Consider this hand: ♠AJ987 ♥32 ♦KQx ♣KQx. If RHO opens 1♥, I would bid a spade and if LHO bid 2♥, and it were passed back to me, I would make a takeout double (remember partner has not bid yet). It is better not to make a takeout double with one five card major, unless you have a great hand.

What about this double? Your LHO opens 1♠, partner passes, RHO bids 1NT (either forcing or not), LHO bids 2♠ and partner doubles. Since the opponents have only bid one suit, and partner did not act immediately, that double is for penalties. Here would be a typical hand ♠KJ10x ♥AQ3, ♦KQ10 ♣103.

May you ever convert a takeout double into a penalty double? Yes, but only when your trump holding is strong enough to pull declarer's trumps. This would be a hand that I would pass a takeout double of 1♥: ♠32 ♥QJ1098 ♦K107 ♣Q10x. When you convert a takeout double to penalties by passing, your partner should ALWAYS lead a trump to prevent declarer from scoring his small trumps.

More on competitive bidding next month.

RANK CHANGES

Following is a list of members who have achieved new ACBL Ranks during the last whatever months.

Diamond Life Master: Joyce Lauterbach

Silver Life Master: Lynn Pope

Life Master: Bill Phillips

Advanced NABC: Sue Kline

NABC Master: Marc Carney

Regional Master: Linda Knox
Sherry Buck

Club Master: Bill Parks
Gil Greytak

Junior Master: George Ward
Helen Naylor

Happy Birthday to US

