



# AUGUST 2019

## NEWSLETTER



### NEW MEMBERS

Following is a list of players who have become members in the past few months. Some are new to the club while others are previous members who returned home.

Judy Bailey	Joan Basile
Carol Camino	Leslie Coakley
Gail Crawford	Maryanne Ebert
Greg Garrison	Gil Greytak
Buddy Hodges	Carolyn Huey
Mary Ann Joseph	Gordon Lien
Jennifer Matheson	Gerald Miller
Tom Nidiffer	John Sheeks
Flo Thigpen	Carolyn Tucker
George Ward	Cheryle Weal

**Welcome to all of you.**

Note – a new corrected Membership List will be emailed to everyone sometime in August. The list will include contact information for these and all other members.

Apologies to anyone we have missed.

### GAMES IN AUGUST

Our Women's Soccer Team once again won the World Cup, and the POTUS's buddy, Megan Rapinoe, won all of the individual honors. Bet she can't wait to go to the White House! Many have said they are the best team ever. I don't know if that's true, but they were sure a kick to watch.

It just occurred to me that I haven't ever mentioned golf in my games reporting. Since all the majors are over, I guess it's a tad late. That's OK. You see, golf is not really a game. It's actually a psychological weapon in a commie conspiracy to inflict emotional damage on wealthy capitalists.

It's hard to believe, but the first pre-season pro football game was held on August 1<sup>st</sup>. That's, like, the middle of the summer. Oh well, I guess its winter somewhere.

So, let's move on to baseball. Nuff said.

This is the final month of qualification for the ACBL North American Pairs. 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. In addition to six of those games we will also have three Charity Games and a Club Championship in August. Other games of interest:

**Dirty Dozen Team Game – Friday, August 9<sup>th</sup>** – Dirty Dozen handicapped format.

**Sectional Tournaments at Clubs (ST@C's) – August 19<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, and 23<sup>rd</sup>** – your opportunity to win silver points at our club.

### Game Schedule - August 2019

Monday 1:30pm	Wednesday 1:30pm	Friday 1:30pm
		2-Aug Open Pairs\$
5-Aug Open Pairs\$	7-Aug Open Pairs\$	9-Aug <b>Dirty Dozen Teams Handicapped#</b>
12-Aug Open Pairs&	14-Aug Open Pairs\$	16-Aug Open Pairs&
19-Aug Open Pairs%	21-Aug Open Pairs%	23-Aug Open Pair%
26-Aug Open Pairs\$	28-Aug Open Pairs&	30-Aug Open Pairs\$

\$ = NAP Qualifier & = Charity Game # = Club Champ % = ST@C

## **SLIP SLIDIN' AWAY**

That's the title of one of many, many hit songs written by Paul Simon, one of the true giants (all 62 inches of him) of the music industry. The lyrics include the following refrain which I fear may be becoming applicable to our club.

*Slip slidin' away  
Slip slidin' away  
You know the nearer your destination  
The more you're slip slidin' away*

In case you haven't noticed, our little club is doing quite well. Our table count has increased for three years running and this year looks like it will be our best ever. Our membership has also increased by over 40% during the same period.

Why?

Well, about three years ago we began a quest to become the nicest bridge club on the planet. Some led, some followed, and some got the hell out of the way. Thankfully, very, very few elected to get in the way. Your efforts changed our reputation from that of a bunch of insular, grumpy, nasty, old people to that of a friendly, nice, welcoming group of young (well maybe not, but at heart) folks. Your efforts have made us successful.

Unfortunately, during the last few months I have witnessed and/or been informed of behaviors that simply don't happen at the nicest bridge club on the planet. These include gratuitous lessons, less than kind remarks about the opponent's results at the table, not helping others, and, worst of all, assuming the mantle of King/Queen of the Universe.

Let's get back on track and stop this crap. No more slip slidin'.

How? Well, here are a few ideas. Regarding unwanted lessons, let's reword Bill Clinton's ill conceived "Don't Ask. Don't Tell." policy to "Don't Tell if Not Asked." Simply bite your tongue (or Hershey Bar) when you feel the urge to make an unkind comment about a table result. If someone needs help, help. Just do it. As for our Kings and Queens, please be advised that the Aiken Bridge Club resides in an alternative universe, not yours.

**Remember, it's not about you, it's about everyone else.**

If that doesn't work for you, look at it this way – you are part of everyone else's everyone else.

I was going to say it takes a village, but I didn't think that old dog would hunt in the **reddest** city in the **reddest** state in America.

## **NOTICE OF BOARD MEETING**

The next meeting of your Board of Directors will be Wednesday, August 21<sup>st</sup> at 11:45 a.m. in the Croft House conference room.

While the agenda is not yet complete, some of the items up for discussion are:

- Rewrite of our By-Laws
- The fields in our games are not well balanced – how to remedy
- There is considerable banter during the bidding and play of hands – how to remedy
- Financial status and state of operations

Remember, our Board Meetings are open to all members, so please join us if you are interested. If you have any items you would like to have included on the Board Meeting Agenda, just talk to any Board Member.

## BECOMING A BETTER PLAYER -- PART 3 MORE TIPS ON COMPETITIVE BIDDING

BY GREG ROBERTS

As we learned last month, the reasons to enter the bidding after the opponents have opened the bidding are threefold: (1) to get your partner to lead your suit, hence, you should overcall with a suit that you want led; (2) to determine if you and your partner have a "fit" so that you can compete judiciously for the contract; (3) to disrupt the opponent's bidding and make it difficult for them to find their "fit."

As I have discussed many times, the bidding is the one area of the game that has most improved in the last 60 years, and one of the greatest areas of improvement has been in bidding with distributional hands. One of the all-time great bridge players was Alvin Roth, who invented many of the conventions or treatments that we routinely use during every game. I played against Roth in the 1973 Vanderbilt Team of Four Championship.

In 1948, Roth invented the unusual NT overcall, and sadly, it is one of the most often mis-used conventions. This bid can be used at the 2 or 4 levels. We will cover later why it should not be used at the 3 level.

First, a very important caveat: the vulnerability should play a pivotal role in your competitive bidding. When you are vulnerable and the opponents are not, competitive bidding should become MUCH more conservative, since a -200 score for down one doubled is often a zero. When neither side is vulnerable, you can loosen up your competitive bidding somewhat, since down one doubled is only -100, and if your opponents, left to their own devices could make +110, you have achieved a par result, even if your opponents choose to double.

When the opponents are vulnerable and you are not, then you should find more reasons to bid than thinking of all the reasons you should not. Think this way, if you and your partner have a known 9 card fit in spades and the opponents can make a vulnerable 4 heart game, you should bid 4 spades, since -500 is better than -620 or -650.

In the original iteration of the unusual NT, it only showed 5-5 or 6-5 in the minors. Now, we should play that it shows that type of distribution in the two lowest unbid suits. If the opponents open the bidding in a major, the bid still shows the minors, but if the opening bid is one diamond, the bid shows clubs and hearts. Similarly, if the opponents open one club, the bid shows diamonds and hearts.

Ideally, the bid shows a hand with two good suits, so that your partner bids his/her better suit (of the two you have shown), he/she will not go down more than one doubled at the three level. When your partner makes this bid, he is telling you that these are the ONLY two suits that the partnership should compete in, unless the partner has a strong suit of his own.

What you are hoping for is that partner would have 4 or more cards in one of your suits, so you can compete further.

Here is a hand that would qualify for use of the unusual NT overcall when neither side is vulnerable: ♠ 4 ♥ 86 ♦ KQ1043 ♣ QJ1092. Notice that the hand has no values in the other two suits, and this requirement is very important when you are using the bid to compete, since you don't want to mislead partner about your hand. So, if partner had ♠ 1086 ♥ J1065 ♦ AJ75 ♣ 83. We can safely compete to the 3 level if no one is vulnerable and the 5 level if the vulnerability is favorable.

But what if you have a great hand? Can you use the unusual NT then? Absolutely.

Here is an example: ♠ A ♥ 7 ♦ KQJ765 ♣ AKQJ5. If my RHO opened a spade, I would bid 4NT at any vulnerability. If partner has three diamonds, you are a virtual lay down for 5 diamonds. If I had the same hand without the singleton spade Ace, I would overcall 2NT and then bid again, showing extra values.

There was a hand on the 29<sup>th</sup> in which our opponent ventured 2NT at equal vulnerability over my 1♠ opening. Here was the hand: ♠ A76 ♥ J6 ♦ KJ76 ♣ Q1065. In the fullness of time, my partner made him pay by doubling his partner's bid of 3♦ and beating the contract 1100.

After one partner makes a two suited overcall, the partner of the person who overcalls is the captain of the ship. The only exception is the super-strong hand type as shown above.

The same overcalling theories are applicable when you use Michaels. By the way, this bid was invented in the 60's by Mike Michaels, a bridge professional in Miami.

The requirements are: the bid shows the other major + another suit. If the opponents open in a minor, two of that minor shows both majors, and if they open in a major, the bid shows the other major plus a minor. The partner of the Michaels bidder will either bid his better major at a low level with 3 or less in the suit, or make the cheapest NT bid to ask the over caller to bid his minor.

Remember that if you use this bid, you are telegraphing your distribution to the opponents, so if they are declaring, and they must locate the queen of their trump suit, they will play your partner for that card.

Let's review the bidding on distributional overcalls. First, they should be tailored to the vulnerability and they show two reasonably good suits, with little or zero values in the other suits. Secondly, the partner of the over caller is usually in charge of further bidding. Once you have told your story, you should not re-tell it.

There is an adjunct to Michaels, and it is known as leaping Michaels, or more accurately Roman Jumps. The bid is used when your opponent opens with a weak two, say in a major. If you jump to the 4 level in a minor, you are showing a huge hand with that minor and the other major. If the opening bid were a weak two diamond bid, your bid of 4 diamonds would show both majors.

Here are examples: over a weak 2 spades, a bid of 4 clubs would show a hand like: ♠ 2 ♥ AKQ87 ♦ 5 ♣ KQJ1054. If your partner has 3 or four hearts, he should correct to that strain or pass with a doubleton heart and no Ace. This bid comes up rarely but is very useful when it does.

Finally, on another topic, it is very important to compete judiciously whenever possible, as we have seen. Say that you have this hand: ♠ AJ54 ♥ 65 ♦ KQ54 ♣ 742, and that the bidding has been you pass, LHO opens one club, partner passes, and RHO bids one heart. You could put a gun to my head, but I would still make a takeout double for the other two suits, so that we can compete to the proper level. All partner needs is 4 reasonable spades and you can complete to the 2 level. We know that partner does not have KQ10xx in spades and another card, since he would have overcalled a spade. This delayed takeout double is an extremely effective competitive tool.

Fall  
Sectional

**AIKEN**

South  
Carolina

**October 4 – 6, 2019**

**Location: Odell Weeks Activity Center  
1700 Whiskey Road (Hwy 19)  
Aiken, SC**



# CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

BY JAY JACOBS

Conventions are artificial bids that communicate or ask for information. Some take up chunks of bidding space (e.g., preempts) to make life harder for the opponents. Most conventions replace natural bids with artificial ones (e.g., short club, better minor, cue bids, Stayman, negative doubles, etc.). Some conventions have multiple versions or interpretations so you and your partner must be on the same wave-length. You should also consider what natural bids you are giving up. Seldom used conventions carry additional risk that one or both partners may forget to use it, fail to recognize it, or misinterpret it.

Many new players fall in love with conventions and want to play as many as possible. While this is admirable, it is more important to become well versed in the intricacies of the game before adopting more advanced, complex, or esoteric conventions. Most people need to play only a limited number of conventions. In my opinion, duplicate players should play certain basic conventions: Stayman (including garbage Stayman), some version of Blackwood, Gerber, negative doubles, transfers over no trump (including super-accepts), weak two bids, weak jump overcalls, preempts at the three level or higher, and unusual no trump. As you get more knowledgeable and sophisticated, you may want to add some more to your arsenal.

Other conventions commonly used at our club include: Bergen raises, Jacoby two no trump, inverted minors, gambling three no trump, one no trump forcing over one of a major, Michaels cue bids, opening one no trump with a five card major, new minor forcing, strong one club or strong two diamonds, control showing responses to strong two bids, Ogust, weak jump shifts NOT in competition, constructive raises, various defenses over opponents no trump (e.g., Cappelletti, DONT, Meckwell), Drury and reverse Drury, support doubles, Lebensohl, Jordan two no trump, puppet Stayman, Lightener doubles, and Montreal relay (aka Kennedy Club). That's quite a list and most of us play only a handful of these. These generally require an alert or announcement. Some are mutually exclusive, so you can't play X if you play Y. Then you must decide which is best for your partnership (which may vary across different partners), and which you are less likely to forget to use or fail to recognize when partner uses it. You should understand what conventions the opponents use so you can deal with them. You may ask your opponents what the meaning of a bid is if you are unsure. It is the responsibility of the one making an alert to explain what the bid means, and not just give the name of the convention, but only if they are asked. You also have the right to ask what alternative bids are available and what they might mean. It is not the responsibility of the person giving the alert to explain if not asked. Indeed, it may provide unauthorized information, since the alert, or explanation thereof, may provide information to their partner. It is, therefore, good policy to wait until the bidding is over to ask what specific bids or sequences mean, unless you expect to enter the auction before that and need to know before doing so. You may ask the meaning of any opponent's bid when it is your turn to bid, or during the play of the hand. It is unethical to ask the meaning of a particular bid as a means of alerting your partner to it.

My rule of thumb in adopting conventions has been to observe who uses what, how well it works, and what natural bids are precluded. I examine conventions used by players more advanced than I. But, try to avoid convention overload. Many excellent players use few conventions. Remember: conventions are a means, not an end.

When adopting a new convention, I try to understand how to deal with any eliminated natural bids. For example, how do I double for penalties when it would otherwise be a negative double? The short answer is you can't. However, you can pass and hope your partner re-opens with a double, and then make a penalty pass. Alternatively, you could bid no trump but that alerts the opponents to a bad situation and likely eliminates a penalty double later in the auction. If you play support doubles, you lose negative doubles and penalty doubles. Likewise, when playing Jacoby two no trump, you can show a lesser raise with Bergen raises or cue-bidding the opponents suit. But, how do you show a standard two no trump response (11-12 points) when lacking three card or more support to partner's opening of one of a major? You will have to bid another suit and then bid no trump later. This may become problematic if you are playing two over one. Then you may need to just bid one

no trump if you don't have a game forcing bid. In any case, if you play one no trump forcing over a major, consider whether that bid is limited or open-ended.

Some conventions (or even systems) have multiple versions. You must make sure you and your partner are playing the same one. If playing two over one, does rebidding a previously bid suit cancel the game force? Is new minor or fourth suit forcing for one round or to game? If you play weak no trumps or Montreal relay, these are parts of larger systems and come with a full set of bids. Adopting part without the whole may lead to confusion and sub-optimization in your bidding. Likewise, consider which conventions are on or off in a competitive auction.

One area of considerable disagreement at our club is with reverses. Many people say "I don't play reverses". But, the reality is that if the only way your partner can return to your initial suit is to go one level higher, you have created a reverse. This means you must have a strong hand. Unless you are already in a game forcing sequence (e.g., two over one), you would not, after all, bid a four card major at the two level after opening one of a minor when it would force partner to the three level to return to your minor suit (especially if partner denied your four card major with their initial bid). While you might not have the requisite 17+ points for a reverse, you should certainly have a strong hand.

Another problem with conventions is some people's propensity to continue bidding. Whoever has described their hand is no longer in control of the auction. The person whose hand has not been described is the captain and makes decisions. Thus, you should not continue bidding or overrule your partner's decision (albeit with rare exceptions). Your conventional response has already told partner what you have. Some conventions require both partners to contribute information (e.g., Jacoby two no trump) but at some point one of the partners makes the final determination. Otherwise, partnership trust becomes eroded.

It is unethical to play conventions as a means of simultaneously providing information to partner and withholding information from the opponents. That is why we fill out convention cards and make alerts or announcements. Consequently, it is counterproductive to adopt a convention solely to keep the opponents in the dark, especially when you may not understand all the ins and outs, or where you or partner may be prone to forgetting it.

Sometimes conventions force the bidding higher than you may want to go. For example, Michaels cue bids and the unusual no trump often require partner to respond at the three level in their better (sometimes, two card) suit, creating a problem. Partner is, of course, off the hook if the opponents make an intervening bid. Thus, partner's response in such a situation implies values, support, and/or willingness to sacrifice. With two suited hands, it may be better to just start bidding suits, especially when one is superior to the other in length or values. Eventually, partner (and, probably, the opponents) will get the idea and the bidding is at a lower level.

Similarly, in dealing with the opponent's one no trump (whether opener, responder, over-caller, or balancer) there are a bunch of questions. When are systems on? What bids are natural and what aren't? Does a double mean a stolen bid or a natural double of the suit bid (whether the bid is real or artificial), or even a double of the suit implied? If the opponent's bid means two suits, does a double apply to any contract, one or both suits, or is it a stolen bid? You need to nail these down. If there is confusion, don't play the convention.

I am reluctant to recommend specific conventions beyond the basics, but everyone should at least understand the following commonly used conventions at our club: Bergen raises, Jacoby two no trump, one no trump forcing over one of a major, new minor and/or fourth suit forcing, inverted minors, Michaels cue bids, Cappelletti, DONT, Montreal relay, and support doubles. After all, how can you bid, defend, or play a contract if you don't know or understand what bids mean (or don't mean)? Bottom line: make sure you understand conventions and how to use them before you adopt them.