

## Aces and Spaces

Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen and welcome to this the 23rd Shark's Pointers Online!

Today's talk is an extension of some of our earlier discussions around bidding judgment. It's called "Aces and Spaces". The 4-3-2-1 Milton Work Point Count system very much undervalues Aces, as we have discussed. Working voids are extremely valuable as well. As we have discussed, aces in long suits are worth much more than aces in short suits.

Bridge is a fascinating game. It is certainly not an exact science, but math and probabilities are important. I don't think it is random luck that some players consistently do better than others, do you? I love numbers. I frequently refer to the Encyclopedia of Bridge to provide you with probabilities that you certainly don't need to memorize, but just having a feel for the math can help you better understand the most likely opportunities for success on a given hand.

You might be surprised to know what the 5 most likely distributions are. Some may think that 4-3-3-3 is the most likely, but that is not the case.

The 4-4-3-2 pattern occurs 21.5512%

Second is 5-3-3-2 at 15.5168%

3) 5-4-3-1 occurs 12.9307%

4) 5-4-2-2 at 10.5797%

4-3-3-3 is the fifth most probable distribution at 10.5361%

These top five hand patterns comprise 71.1145% of all the hands!

The other night, I witnessed a number of wildly distributional hands - in the same session!

On the second deal of the set, there was a hand with 7-3-3-0 distribution.

According to the Encyclopedia of Bridge, the likelihood of this distribution is 0.2652%!

On the 4th deal of the set, there was another hand with 7-3-3-0 distribution.

Then on the 20th deal of the session there were actually two hands with good 7 card suits and a void! One had 7-4-2-0 distribution which occurs 0.3617% of the time and another hand in the same deal had 7-5-1-0 distribution with occurs only 0.1085% of the time.

Here was the first hand....

Aces and Spaces

IMPs  
**Board 2**  
 East Deals  
 N-S Vul

♠ K 10 8 4	♠ 6 3	♠ Q 5 2
♥ 8 5 2	♥ A Q J 10 7	♥ —
♦ 10 8 3	♦ Q J 9 7 5	♦ A K 4
♣ Q 9 7	♣ 3	♣ A K 8 6 5 4 2
	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; border: 1px solid black;">                 N                  W     E                  S             </div>	
	♠ A J 9 7	
	♥ K 9 6 4 3	
	♦ 6 2	
	♣ J 10	

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		1 ♣	2 ♣
Pass	4 ♥	5 ♣	Pass
Pass	5 ♥	Pass	Pass
Dbl	All pass		

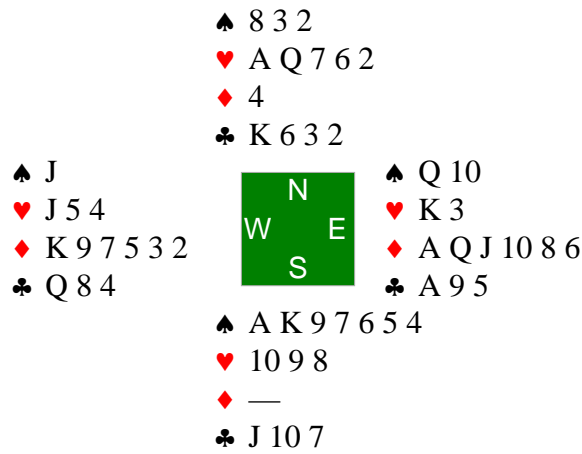
5 ♥× by North

The East hand opened the bidding 1C, South bid 2C to show the majors, and after a pass by West and a jump to 4H, East bids 5C. As you can see, it goes pass, pass, 5H. East passes it around to his partner who doubles. With best defense, North should go down 2 tricks vulnerable for +500 EW. What happened, however, was East cashed a high diamond, then tried to cash 2 clubs! So declarer was able to set up diamonds to pitch all of his spade losers - down 1 (+200)

We'll come back to this hand later. Now let's look at another hand from the same set.

Aces and Spaces

IMPs  
**Board 4**  
 West Deals  
 Both Vul



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	Pass	1 NT	2 ♠
Dbl	3 ♠	4 ♦	Pass
Pass	4 ♠	Pass	Pass
5 ♦	Pass	Pass	5 ♠
Dbl	All pass		

5 ♠× by South

Notice the similarity with the last hand? In this case, the South hand has a seven bagger in spades and a diamond void.

Again, not much to the play. South ruffed the opening lead, drew trumps and finessed West for the J of hearts. When East won the K, he was able to then ran his hearts pitching 2 clubs. He ended up scoring 7 spades and 4 hearts - making 5Sx

We'll come back to discuss this hand in more detail later, but first let's take a look at this highly improbable deal that occurred later in the session!:

IMPS

**Board 20**

West Deals

Both Vul

Aces and Spaces

♠ Q 10 9	♠ A 8 6 5 2	♠ K J 7 4 3
♥ 6 3	♥ 8 2	♥ A K Q 9 7 5 4
♦ 9 5 3 2	♦ K 8	♦ —
♣ Q 8 5 4	♣ A 9 7 2	♣ 6
	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid black;">           N W     E S         </div>	
	♠ —	
	♥ J 10	
	♦ A Q J 10 7 6 4	
	♣ K J 10 3	

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	1 ♠	4 ♥	5 ♦
All pass			

5 ♦ by South

Notice anything special about this hand ?

Both East and South contain a good 7 card suit and a void!

Wow! Let's talk about this one and go back and look at the other two.

There wasn't much to the play in 5D. West led a heart, and after East won the top two hearts, he shifted to his singleton club, eliminating declarer's guess - making 5 for a score of +600 for North South - and 9.7 IMPs.

But look what happens if East bids 5H instead of passing. If and only if South leads a club to partner and North immediately returns a spade, can East be set in 5H. Both times this hand was played in hearts, EW made 11 tricks. If E had bid 5H, he would probably have won 12 IMPs instead of losing almost 10!

Is there any way East could know what to do? Well, one big clue might be that his partner didn't double 5D. This would lead him to think his chances of beating the contract would be very low. Looks like he might have a pretty good sacrifice. He might be scoring 2 hearts and a spade, but that really isn't very likely. All in all, it just feels that sacrificing in 5H might be cheap - especially at IMPs. On the other hand, there is a tried and true saying that "5 Level Belongs To The Opponents". Bridge is not an exact science. Let's look at the other deals to see if we can get a feel for what might make sense.

IMPs  
**Board 2**  
 East Deals  
 N-S Vul

Aces and Spaces

♠ K 10 8 4	♠ 6 3	♠ Q 5 2
♥ 8 5 2	♥ A Q J 10 7	♥ —
♦ 10 8 3	♦ Q J 9 7 5	♦ A K 4
♣ Q 9 7	♣ 3	♣ A K 8 6 5 4 2
	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: green; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; border: 1px solid black;">           N            W     E            S         </div>	
	♠ A J 9 7	
	♥ K 9 6 4 3	
	♦ 6 2	
	♣ J 10	

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		1 ♣	2 ♣
Pass	4 ♥	5 ♣	Pass
Pass	5 ♥	Pass	Pass
Dbl	All pass		

5 ♥× by North

Our first deal is quite a bit different from the one we just reviewed. Big differences are that NS are Vul and EW is not, and it also appears quite likely that we have at least 3 tricks against 5HX.

It looks from East's perspective that NS are sacrificing. In fact, perfect defense would have resulted in +500 for a very good score for EW. (+3 IMPS vs -7 IMPS on this deal)

A big reason for the poor result for EW on this deal had to do with the bidding. For East to play a spade instead of a second club is nearly impossible. But if the bidding were different, it might be very likely. Let's revisit the big East hand from a Losing Trick Count perspective. East has 2 3/4 spade losers, 1 diamond loser, and 0+ club losers - just under 4 losers.

Using LTC, the definition of a strong 2 club opener that I follow is any hand with 4 or less losers - and at least half the Aces and Kings. This hand meets those criteria. After a 2C opener, at unfavorable, it is highly unlikely the opps will compete to the 5 level to begin with, and if they are too feisty, they just might paint a picture that will show EW how they can actually bid and make 6 clubs!

Let's look at the other hand....


## Aces and Spaces

IMPs

### **Board 4**

West Deals

Both Vul

	♠ 8 3 2		
	♥ A Q 7 6 2		
	♦ 4		
	♣ K 6 3 2		
♠ J		♠ Q 10	
♥ J 5 4		♥ K 3	
♦ K 9 7 5 3 2		♦ A Q J 10 8 6	
♣ Q 8 4		♣ A 9 5	
	♠ A K 9 7 6 5 4		
	♥ 10 9 8		
	♦ —		
	♣ J 10 7		

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	Pass	1 NT	2 ♠
Dbl	3 ♠	4 ♦	Pass
Pass	4 ♠	Pass	Pass
5 ♦	Pass	Pass	5 ♠
Dbl	All pass		

5 ♠× by South

I held the South hand, and decided that my hand was potentially strong enough defensively - and had so many losers - that I didn't need to risk preempting to 3S. But having overcalled vul, I didn't think it wise to bid over 4D. When partner competed to 4S, however, and didn't double 5D, it seemed quite likely that opps were making 5D, so I decided to sacrifice. Little did I expect to actually make the hand - which, as you can see, is actually cold as the cards lie!

Bidding one more sometimes can make sense. All rules are made to be broken. 5 level does not always belong to the opponents.

I've highlighted these 3 deals to provide some food for thought. There are no absolute right or wrong answers on any of the 3 hands, but there were some excellent pointers that can help you know what to do and how to best defend if you so choose.

See you next week!