

Confessions of a "Self-Kibitzer"

Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the 15th session of "Shark's Pointers Online" - Wow! Can you believe it? - 15!! and many of you have attended each and every session. Thank you very much for your great support!

Last week, you may recall that I mentioned a nightly invitational expert game that I have very much enjoyed the past several weeks. Specifically, I mentioned how playing with Andrew Chesterton against living legends and many time World Champions Bob Hamman and Peter Weischel, Andrew was doubled twice in the same evening in 5D contracts. On the first 5DX contract, he scored it up. On the second - he not only made it, he actually made an overtrick. I love playing against "the iron", and the only thing I enjoy more than my hookwinking la creme de la creme is to have my partners give the top players a good whupping. The great thing about this game is that on any given day, on any given hand, even the best of the best can be beaten by an average pair.

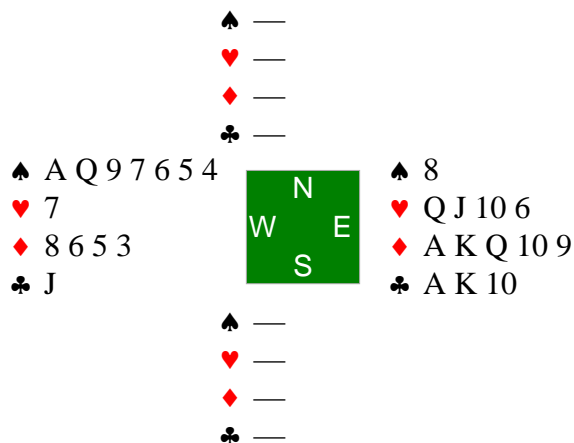
My wife, Sue, loves kibitzing these expert IMP Pair games. I play in one room and she watches from a room across the hall. A couple of weeks ago, I made a particularly bad bid and I heard a loud scream from her. 'Ohhh NOO!!!'. I dropped what I was doing and ran over to see what was going on. She was fine. But she said, "How could you pass! You are cold for slam!". It occurred to me that she could see all the cards. I never realized that. So, what this means, is that I can play online on one device - my iphone or a laptop, and I can watch the play from Sue's phone. WOW! What an easy way to cheat. So, I was very careful from that point forward to make sure that Sue and I were very far apart, and there was no mention of any hand in play. To me, cheating at bridge is not only immoral, and illegal, it isn't fun.

I don't know how many of you are frequent readers of "BridgeWinners". It's actually a very interesting website. www.bridgewinners.com that has a lot of great articles and input from some of the finest bridge players in the world. The other day, an article was posted by a young Polish bridge pro named Michal Nowosadzki. Michal has been on one of the best bridge teams in the world. Since 2013, he has won 7 major NABC+ team events - including 2 Spingolds and a Reisinger - and has 4 seconds. He is a World Grand Master and has won numerous international events - including 3 World Championships. Currently, he is ranked #5 in the world.

Well, it turns out, that Michal wrote an article entitled "Confessions of a Self Kibitzer" in which he admits having cheated online repeatedly over a period of a few months. He points to the fact that he has a seven month old baby that keeps him up at night, and he started doing this out of tiredness. He never mentioned the specific hands in which he took advantage of seeing all the cards. He never spoke to how many thousands of dollars he has been paid for playing bridge in this manner. In January, I was selected to be a member of the US Bridge Federation Board of Directors, so I didn't think it appropriate to comment on BridgeWinners. Truthfully, I was taken aback by all the support and sympathy that was expressed by top players like Bobby Levin. Even Adam Grossack posted a very supportive message. The only top player who I saw speak out against Michal's conduct was Michael Rosenberg. Today I want to highlight one or two hands that would illustrate how significant it would be if one could see all hands during the play.

Confessions of A "Self-Kibitzer"

IMPs



West	North	East	South
<i>Mark the Shark</i>	<i>Jeff Wolfson</i>	<i>An Honest Man</i>	<i>Steve Garner</i>
	3 ♣	3 N	Pass
4 ♠	Pass	4 N	Pass
5 ♣	Pass	5 ♦	Pass
6 ♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	Pass	6 N	Dbl
7 ♦	Pass	Pass	Dbl
All pass			
7 ♦ × by East			

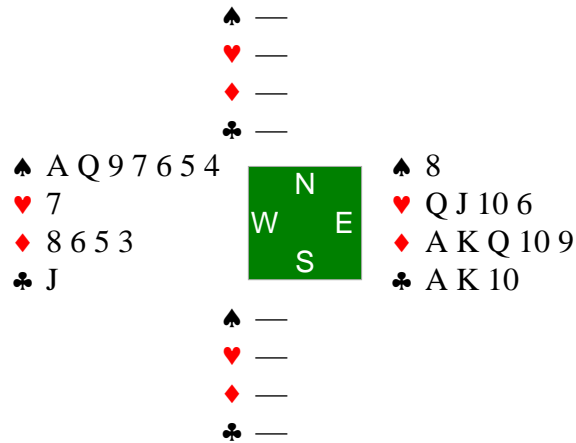
Opening lead 2 of ♦

The diagrammed deal highlights some pretty bad bidding by my honest partner - a very good player in his own right, who didn't shine on this hand - except for his integrity. We were playing a top notch pair, Steve Garner and Jeff Wolfson. Steve has won 11 major NABC+ championships, and has finished 2nd 11 times. Jeff is his wealthy sponsor, but I can assure you that he is a very talented player in his own right. He has won 5 NABC+ championships and has a 2nd during the past 30 years.

The bidding was as shown. I think his bid of 3 NT is not unreasonable even with 1 spade as he does have 19 HCP and he certainly cannot pass 3C. But when his partner bids 4S, he must pass. He should ask himself how many spades his partner must have to bid 4S on this auction. How many do you think? If you said 6 or more, you'd be right. There is no way partner will pull 3N to 4S with only 5. Next, partner should realize that 4 NT must be blackwood on this auction - not to play. We just got deeper and deeper with every subsequent twist and turn. As is all too often the case, one will make bids that make sense in a vacuum, but in reality have a totally different meaning than what was intended. My 5C bid showed 1 or 4 keycards. His 5D was not natural - although he assumed it was. Instead it was a Queen ask. So I made the "correct" bid of 6S. That was promptly doubled. Now pard ran to 6N and that was quickly doubled as well. At this point, it occurred to me that partner must have diamonds, so I pulled 6Nx to 7D.

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IMPs



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<i>Mark the Shark</i>	<i>Jeff Wolfson</i>	<i>An Honest Man</i>	<i>Steve Garner</i>
	3 ♣	3 N	Pass
4 ♠	Pass	4 N	Pass
5 ♣	Pass	5 ♦	Pass
6 ♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	Pass	6 N	Dbl
7 ♦	Pass	Pass	Dbl
All pass			
7 ♦ × by East			

Opening lead 2 of ♦

This is one of those great hands in which the bidding pretty well marks the location of every high card. So, let's discuss this. Who has the Q of clubs? Who has the K of spades? Where are the top hearts? What's going on with the trumps? Are they 2-2 or 3-1?

The 3 club preempt pretty much marks the location of the club Queen. South's double of 6S, and later of 6N pretty well marks him not only with the K of spades - but likely with the AK of hearts as well. Ok. So why did a top expert professional bridge player lead a trump? I guess he never dreamed he'd lose both his heart winners, and would get a chance to lead a second trump when in with a heart. The play at trick one went 2-3-4...it sure looks like South has started with Jxx of diamonds.

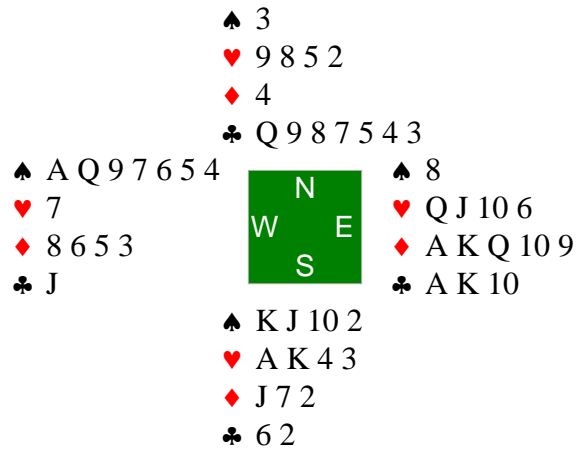
So, let's count our tricks as declarer in 7Dx. We have 5 diamond tricks in hand. 2 spade tricks with the aid of the spade finesse. 3 club tricks with the aid of the club finesse, and 1 heart trick after ruffing out the A and K. Add to this our 2 heart ruffs in dummy and voila! We add up to 13! Well, let's think thru the play. We obviously can't draw more than 2 rounds of trumps because we need to ruff two heart in dummy. From North's play of the 4 and South's lead of the 2 of diamonds at trick 1, it sure looks like trumps are 3-1, but let's see if there is any problem with drawing 2 rounds of trumps.

Confessions of A "Self-Kibitzer"

IMPs

North Deals

E-W Vul



West	North	East	South
<i>Mark the Shark</i>	<i>Jeff Wolfson</i>	<i>An Honest Man</i>	<i>Steve Garner</i>
	3 ♣	3 N	Pass
4 ♠	Pass	4 N	Pass
5 ♣	Pass	5 ♦	Pass
6 ♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	Pass	6 N	Dbl
7 ♦	Pass	Pass	Dbl
All pass			
7 ♦ × by East			

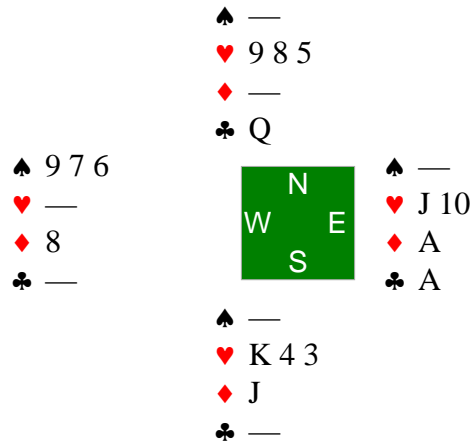
Opening lead 2 of ♦

If we play a second round of trumps, not surprisingly North pitches a club.

Here you can see the full actual deal - and your initial guesstimate proves to be remarkably accurate! We take a spade finesse, pitching a heart from hand as North pitches another club. Now we run the J of clubs, as North follows low. We're in dummy and ruff a spade to hand with the 10 of ♦ and run the Q of ♥ which is covered as we ruff. Now we ruff another spade with the Q of ♦, run the J of hearts which is covered and we ruff with dummy's last trump. Uh oh! Looks like we have painted ourselves in a corner.

This is the position....

Confessions of A "Self Kibitzer"



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	3 ♣	3 N	Pass
4 ♠	Pass	4 N	Pass
5 ♣	Pass	5 ♦	Pass
6 ♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	Pass	6 N	Dbl
7 ♦	Pass	Pass	Dbl
All pass			

7 ♦ × by East

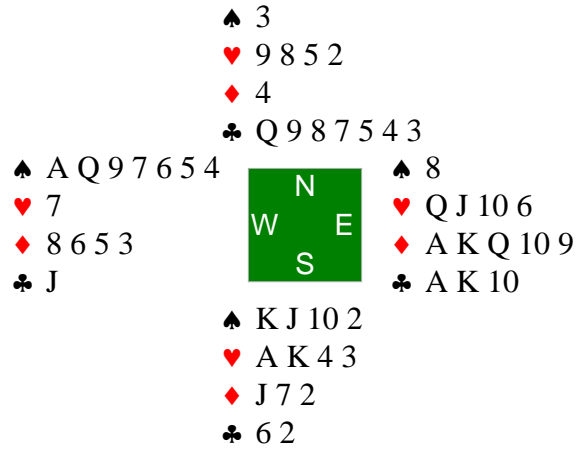
After we ruff out the top heart, we are stuck in dummy. If we ruff a spade with our last trump, we set up South's Jack.

SO HAVING GONE THRU THIS EXERCISE, WE HAVE LEARNED WE CAN'T AFFORD TO PLAY A SECOND ROUND OF TRUMPS!!!

Let's start over.

Confessions of A "Self-Kibitzer"

IMPs
North Deals
E-W Vul

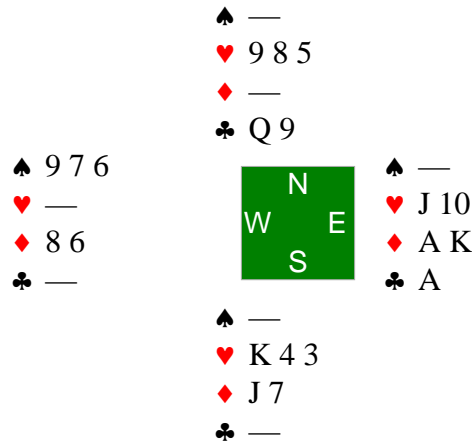


West	North	East	South
<i>Mark the Shark</i>	<i>Jeff Wolfson</i>	<i>An Honest Man</i>	<i>Steve Garner</i>
	3 ♣	3 N	Pass
4 ♠	Pass	4 N	Pass
5 ♣	Pass	5 ♦	Pass
6 ♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	Pass	6 N	Dbl
7 ♦	Pass	Pass	Dbl
All pass			
7 ♦ × by East			

Opening lead 2 of ♦

Let's win the trump return and immediately play a spade to dummy's Q and A, pitching the 6 of ♥ from hand. Now run the J of clubs as North does not help us by covering. Now we ruff a spade to hand with our 10 of ♦, leaving us with the AKQ, cash a high club to pitch a heart from dummy and breathe a sigh of relief as South follows to the second club. Now we play a heart and assume South covers as we ruff with one of dummy's remaining 3 trumps. Now we can ruff another spade to hand with our Q of ♦. Here's the new end position....

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<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	3 ♣	3 N	Pass
4 ♠	Pass	4 N	Pass
5 ♣	Pass	5 ♦	Pass
6 ♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	Pass	6 N	Dbl
7 ♦	Pass	Pass	Dbl
All pass			

7 ♦ × by East

Now we lead the J of ♥, which is covered as we ruff in dummy. But since we didn't draw a second round of trumps earlier, we have a trump in dummy which we lead back to hand, draw the other missing trump and claim!! 7Dx making vulnerable instead of down 1 doubled vulnerable at IMPs. That is +2330 vs -200. That's a difference of about 30 IMPs!

Now let's compare that hand with a couple of other hands this past week from the very same expert IMP pair game in which I just happened to be playing with the same honest partner...

On neither one did I fare very well...

Confessions of A "Self Kibitzer"

West Deals
N-S Vul

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

West	North	East	South
<i>Mark the Shark</i>	<i>Rick Roeder</i>	<i>An Honest Man</i>	<i>Alan Watson</i>
1 ♣	1 ♦	Pass	1 ♠
2 ♥	4 ♠	5 ♣	5 ♠
All pass			
5 ♠ by South			

I led the A of clubs, on which partner played the J. I shifted to A and a heart, declarer won the K and took a trump finesse. You may note that if I hadn't cashed the Ace of hearts, declarer would have played a diamond to his J, finessed the K of spades, drawn trumps and run his diamonds pitching both his hearts. Have you noticed the winning defense?

Opening lead of the 9 of clubs (suit preference for hearts) overtaken by East and a heart shift!

Sound implausible? Well, not if you are a "self-kibitzer". (Happily I am not) If you think that underleading and AKQ is implausible, I would invite you to compare with this final hand.

Confessions of A "Self Kibitzer"

IMP Pairs
West Deals
None Vul

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

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

West	North	East	South
<i>Mark the Shark</i>	<i>Eric Schwartz</i>	<i>An Honest Man</i>	<i>Adam Grossack</i>
Pass	Pass	1 ♠	2 ♦
2 ♠	Pass	3 ♥	3 ♠
4 ♥	5 ♦	Pass	Pass
5 ♥	Pass	Pass	Dbl
All pass			

5 ♥× by East

My good friend, the top expert and local phenom, Adam Grossack, led the Ace of spades and then led the 6 of diamonds (suit preference) to Eric's 8 for the spade ruff - down 1 doubled!

The thing that galls me about this hand is not that young Adam found a pretty defense to defeat 5H, in fact, two other expert players - Bart Bramley of Dallas, TX, and Jared Lilenstein of New York City found the same killing defense. What galls me is that my poor bidding judgement is so well-known that he had the temerity to double 5H! (By the way, I in no way am implying Adam was "self-kibitzing", but I did later had fun with him for his amazing double. Adam is, without question, one of the most ethical players I have ever known.)

I have frequently said that my epitath has already been written. "Here lies Mark Aquino, Overbidder. He finally passed!"

Today's Shark's Pointer is that we are blessed to have online bridge during this pandemic to help us all to maintain and sustain our bridge interest and enthusiasm. But please, please be alert to potential irregularities. Active ethics, politeness and civil decorum is as important online as it is face to face. Cheating, whether you call it something innocuous like "self-kibitzing" or something a little nastier, is still a terrible offense - and should in no way be condoned.