

GCBA NEWSLETTER

Season 2019-20

April-May 2020

A PLAY QUIZ

Let's start with a simple quiz. How do you play the following suit combinations: get them all right and you should be in the County first team (answers on page 2)

Question 1

You play in 4♠ and need a quick discard from dummy on the third round of diamonds. Unfortunately, there are trumps outstanding. How do you play this suit:-

Declarer Dummy
♦AKQJ ♦52

Question 2

You are in 3NT. How do you play this suit:-

Declarer Dummy
♦AKQJT5 ♦2

Question 3

You are in 3NT. How do you play this suit:-

Declarer Dummy
♦AKQJ852 ♦76

Question 4

You are in 3NT and about to run this suit. How do you play this suit:-

Declarer Dummy
♦KJ97 ♦AQT86

Question 5

You play in diamonds with this trump suit. How do you play this suit:-

Declarer Dummy
♦KQJT98 ♦4

DIFFICULT TIMES

Because all of our clubs are closed, this month's newsletter is only being published on-line.

No-one knows when life will return to normal and we can get back to playing in our clubs and meeting our friends face-to-face again, but it will happen at some point – so what can we do meanwhile to further our own game? Below are some suggestions to help fill your days.

PLAYING ONLINE

A large number of GCBA members are already playing regularly on-line. You can play in pairs and teams events organised by the EBU and carrying EBU master points, as well as GCBA or club games. In addition, you can organise your own private games and use the site facilities for such things as bidding practice and solo play.

Both the GCBA and EBU websites have information to get you started if you haven't yet given this a try.

USING LOCKDOWN TIME TO IMPROVE YOUR GAME

The internet has a wealth of of my methods bridge material available to explore for free:-

- Although we are not currently posting new problems, our own GCBA website 'Hand of the day' section has hundreds of play and defensive problems for you to try out.
- Bridgewinners.com features an excellent series of articles by Kit Woolsey (Kits Korner) which take you step-by-step

through the thoughts of an expert as a hand is bid and played. This series is really aimed at advanced players.

- Bridgeclues2.com is a site suitable for players of all abilities. There are daily problems at 2 levels of difficulty. There are also bidding tips but as this is an American site, this aspect is less useful for most of us.
 - The ACBL Newsfeed section has syndicated American newspaper columns which generally feature a play problem - go to acbl.org.
 - Suitplay is a small freeware program that you can download (just search for suitplay on google). You can enter card combinations and it tells you the best way to play the suit to obtain different numbers of tricks.
 - A wealth of Youtube videos are appearing : search for "bridge Robson" or "bridge Magee" or "bridge over my shoulder".
- Of course, there are other ways to fill your time with bridge related matters.
- Now would be a good time to update your convention card (or to create one for each of your partnerships if you haven't got one already). It is very useful to include as much information on your card as possible. Not only does this help the opposition to understand your methods, it can help in any dispute if the director needs to get involved. Perhaps more importantly, I use my convention card as a reminder to myself (before each session – not during) of just what I play with this particular partner.

GCBA NEWSLETTER

Season 2019-20

April-May 2020

- Spend time discussing system with your partner. In particular, rather than add some new gadget to your methods, you should try and put some flesh on the bones of your existing methods. This is what better players do all the time.

For example, consider a common sequence that starts 1NT - 2♣, a simple Stayman sequence that we probably all play and well know how to respond to. But what happens if the next player doubles for the lead? Do you just ignore the double and bid as you would without it, or do you make use of the two additional calls (pass and redouble) to your advantage? A playable method is to redouble with good clubs, to bid 2♦ with 5 diamonds and to bid a major with 4 cards and also a stop in clubs. If you don't hold a hand that meets one of these criteria, you pass and partner can redouble at his turn to ask about majors.

If you play this method, then you also need to consider the situation where opener passes and the next opponent raises clubs – is double now penalty or a further request for a major? You need to agree on this with partner and most importantly, you need to write it down so you don't forget it.

- Create or update your system file. All established pairs (whatever their skill level) should have a file in which they record the methods they use. A world champion's system file might be 100+ pages long, but for the average club player, a couple of pages might suffice.

A sensible approach is to agree that you play what is written in the file and if it isn't written down then you don't play it – this stops arguments and allows both partners to be clear on what they do.

PLAY QUIZ ANSWERS

Those that thought this was a belated April Fools waste of their time might learn something from the answers.

Part of the art of declarer play is to fool the opposition and sow doubts in their minds at every opportunity.

Question 1

No problem if diamonds break 4-3 but you can give yourself an extra chance if left hand opponent has a doubleton. Lead the AK and then the Jack. Leftie may not ruff if he thinks his partner has the Queen.

Question 2

Give your opponents some trouble. Start with the King. Maybe the opponents will give count signals (and those who play Smith Peters might get their messages mixed up). After the King and Ace, continue with something confusing such as the ten. If left hand opponent is about to show out, his discard could be critical to the hand as a whole. He might think his partner is about to win this trick. He may abandon a card in a critical side suit in order to cling to a suit that he thinks is about to run. The defence won't get confused if you just lead cards from the top.

Question 3

After playing off the four honours (maybe following the guidance in Q2), play the 8 and follow it with the 2.

Competent defenders will know you have another card left in this suit but often players lose track. When they see the two, they may assume it is the last discard that they need to make. When you next produce the 5, they may already have made a fatal discard.

Question 4

Best is to start with the Jack for a fake finesse. Both opponents may think partner has the King. If the suit is 3-1, this assumption might affect the discarding on the second round as placing partner with the missing King could confuse the high card picture of the entire deal. Continue with the 9 to dummy's ten. If right hand opponent shows out, he won't know exactly what is going on. Then continue the suit in such a way as to keep the short defender in the dark as long as possible. If RHO has a singleton, continuing the suit from dummy forces him to make 3 discards before seeing even 1 discard from his partner.

Question 5

The answer to this one depends on what you want to achieve. If you want to sneak through a couple of rounds of trumps to reduce the chances of a ruff, then start with the Queen and if it holds, continue with the 8. This ultimately tells them your holding but does that matter? If you want to keep opponents in the dark about your suit quality, lead them from the top. This encourages the defenders to take their Ace early and keeps them in the dark as to your exact holding. By playing your cards in a tricky fashion, you will be surprised how often defenders will make mistakes from which you can profit.