

Summertown Bridge Bulletin 18 January 2021

There were many shapely hands last night, but I just know you want to read about that most basic of bidding aids, the Losing Trick Count (LTC). The basic LTC calculation is better than nothing, but only just. We can make adjustments in lots of different ways, but a mechanical process is one way:

$Q = +\frac{1}{2}$ loser (unless trumps)

$A = -\frac{1}{2}$ loser

$AJ10 = 1\frac{1}{2}$ loser

$Qxx = 2\frac{1}{2}$ losers unless trumps

With 8+ card fit subtract $\frac{1}{2}$ /1 loser for each extra card

Playing a weak NT, South opens 1♠ and West doubles.

North's 8 HCP (worth 9 HCP) indicates a 2♠ response; a LTC of 8 on the basic LTC system would suggest 3♠. North has a balanced hand so HCP can often be a better guide than the LTC.

North's ♣Qxx is bad, an extra $\frac{1}{2}$ loser; no ace is bad, an extra $\frac{1}{2}$ loser. A 5th spade is good, normally $\frac{1}{2}$ loser, but South will have 5 spades ~80% of the time (playing 4 card majors) so the 5th spade here is worth a full 1 loser, bringing the LTC back to where we started, LTC = 8. North should bid 3♠.

South's 16 HCP indicates a raise to 4♠, but the hearts don't look nice and the LTC of 7 on the basic LTC system would suggest a pass.

South's 5th spade is normally $\frac{1}{2}$ loser to the good, but North may have assumed South will have 5 spades.

But the decider is the 3 aces, worth 1½ losers, so South is clear to bid 4♠.

60% of pairs got it right on the night.

South opens 1♥, West stays quiet, hoping to come in later.

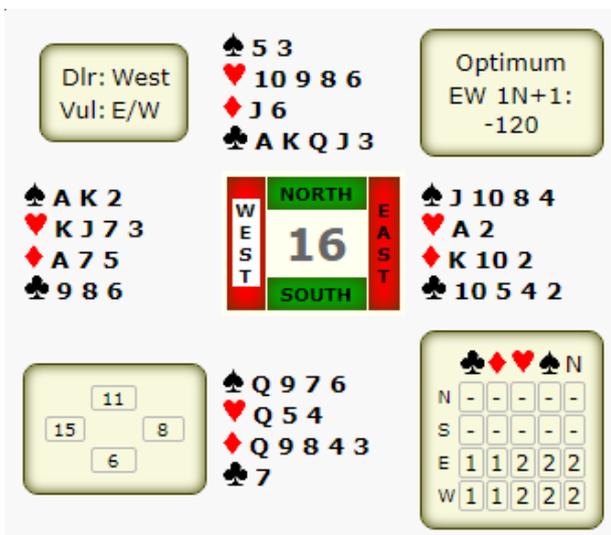
North has 8 HCP (worth 8 HCP with the 2 aces and 10 balancing the 4333 shape), indicating a 2♥ response. Basic LTC gives 10 losers, adjusted to 9 with the two aces, but still a 2♥ response.

South has 17 HCP, which would suggest an invitational bid. 3♥ may be played as pre-emptive and 3♣ as a trial bid, so neither seem right.

The LTC comes to the rescue. South has 5 losers with the basic system which would certainly indicate 4♥ at Teams, but possibly not Matchpoint Pairs.

The 5th heart is worth $\frac{1}{2}$ loser and the 2 aces 1 loser, so 4♥ becomes an easy rebid.

60% of pairs got it right on the night.



Changing the subject slightly, I have come across a new acronym:

PPE

PPE offers you protection when your partner berates for making an iffy bid that turns out badly.

You are North.

West opens 1♥, 1NT (weak, with a slight stretch) or 1NT (strong).

You bid 2♣ not vulnerable and win the contract. You confidently expect partner to deliver 2 tricks from her expected 8 HCP. Those hearts might deliver a slow trick, and anyway -50 or -100 should be a great result.

You win 5 tricks and go 3 off.

Your partner gives you the hairdryer treatment, having read somewhere that 2-level overcalls should generally promise a six-card suit. This is a very good guideline when vulnerable. But you are NV. Over 1♥, is a pass by North good bridge? It does look like a defensive hand. This hand would pass over 1NT if playing 2♣ as natural or artificial (unless you play Brozel or some other exotic convention that can show 5/4 Minor/Major).

You need your PPE – the **P**retty **P**icture **E**xcuse.

‘Sorry, partner, I assumed you’d want me to bid with my four pretty pictures.’

It looks like Neil and Esther Whiting were the only pair not needing PPE.

James Bentley