

THE BRIGHT LEAF ALERT

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF UNIT 191

AUGUST 2025

From your President:

Are you enjoying the slightly cooler weather these past few days? I know that I am. Hopefully the worst of the heat is behind us. If not, it is most comfortable at a bridge table near you! Join us!

The Board is busy planning for the fall. We will start up our mentoring program again in September. **Michael Lavine** is coordinating this program for us again (Thank you Michael!) so please talk to him if you have questions

We are also planning our fall sectional tournament scheduled for November 13-16, 2025. The only way that we can run this tournament is with your help. As you may remember, we had to cancel our summer sectional because we did not have enough volunteers to help. Several of you were dismayed and pulled me aside and said "If I had known that the sectional was in danger of being cancelled I could have helped!" Well you have another chance. The more people that step up, the more we lighten the load. We will notify everyone of a tournament planning meeting that will be held in a few weeks. Please look for an email next week with meeting details and volunteer sign up. Thanks!

This summer, we have been running many special events. In addition to our twice a month Unit Championship games, we have been

hosting NAP qualifying games. In June we held STAC games and we intend to do the same in mid-August. STAC games are a great way to earn silver points while playing in the comfort of your own club. We have also started offering limited masterpoint games for non-life masters each month. Right now we are trying to host one each month. The June game was a big success. If demand increases, dare we try two or three of them? Let's do it!

Finally, the Unit was pleased by the return rate for our Unit survey. Look for information about the results soon.

See you at a bridge table soon!

Deanna



AUGUST BRIDGE SCHEDULE

AUGUST 2025

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2
				12:30 PM NAP Game	TBA Closed
4	5	6	7	8	9
9-11 am Online Play & Learn (RSVP) 12:30 PM Unit Championship Game 6:30 Social Bridge	1:00–4:00 PM Nuplicate Barometer	10:00 AM – Noon Newcomers Nuplicate 12:30 PM Stratified Open Game		12:30 PM Stratified Open Game	TBA Closed
11	12	13	14	15	16
9-11 am Online Play & Learn (RSVP) 12:30 PM NAP game 6:30 Social Bridge	1:00–4:00 PM Nuplicate Barometer	10:00 AM – Noon Newcomers Nuplicate 12:30 PM Stratified Open Game		12:30 PM NAP Game	10:00 AM 8 Is Enough Swiss Teams
18	19	20	21	22	23
9-11 am Online Play & Learn (RSVP) 12:30 PM STAC game 6:30 Social Bridge	1:00–4:00 PM Nuplicate Barometer	10:00 AM – Noon Newcomers Nuplicate 12:30 PM NAP Game	9:30 AM Limited Game (0-750 MPS) 18 boards	12:30 PM Unit Champion- ship Game	TBA Closed
25	26	27	28	29	30
9-11 am Online Play & Learn (RSVP) 12:30 PM NAP Game 6:30 Social Bridge	1:00–4:00 PM Nuplicate Barometer	10:00 AM – Noon Newcomers Nuplicate 12:30 PM Stratified Open Game		12:30 PM Stratified Open Game	

LOSING TRICK COUNT FOR EVALUATING SLAM POTENTIAL

Written by Ed Fuller

Unit 191's Hall of Fame recipient for 2025, **Ed Fuller**, submitted this article for the alert in 2014. This is one of the many contributions Ed provided to me—making the Alert interesting and informational. Thanks Ed!

With both hands vulnerable your hand is:

S—AQ9754

H—A86

D -

C—A842

Partner opens 1D, you bid 1S, and partner responds 1NT. You force with 2C (New Minor Forcing), to which partner bids 2S showing 3 card support. Are you thinking just game, after all, partner has shown a minimum hand, and also opened in the suit that you are void? Or, are you thinking slam?

Using normal hand evaluation, your hand has 14 HCPs and 3 to 5 for the void, depending on your methods. So, if partner only has 12 or 13 HCPS, slam is perhaps iffy.

Let's try Losing Trick Count (LTC) for evaluating your hand. Don't think of losers, think of LTC as an additional way to evaluate your hand. See LTC rules below. The level at which you can expect to play in a trump contract is determined by 18 minus the combined KLTC of your partner's and your hands. As opener will typically have a LTC of 7. Responder's raise to the two level shows a LTC of 9: $18-7-9 = 2$, so a 2-level contract should make. Similarly, responder's limit raise shows a LTC of 8: $18-6-8 = 3$, so a 3-level contract should make.

Okay, apply the LTC technique to the hand above. The LTC is 1, 2, 0, 2 for spades, hearts, diamonds, and clubs, respectively., for a total LTC of 5. Partner is expected to have a LTC of 7 for his opener, so the combined LTC is 12, and the

makeable contract should be 18—7—5, or 6, a small slam. If you don't like subtracting, think of a 5 LTC hand as 2 better than the 7 LTC hand needed to bid game. So, you should make 2 tricks better than game, or again, a small slam.

Partner's hand is:

S—KT6

H—K9

D— K753

C— K965

Truly, a minimum, and perhaps not all would open this hand in first seat vulnerable, but nonetheless a small slam is a good bet.

The complete deal and play of the hand were the subject of Bobby Wolff's bridge column, "Aces Bobby Wolff on Bridge," published in the Raleigh News and Observer on May 21, 2014. Wolff's columns appear online at <http://aces.bridgeblogging.com/> approximately two weeks later, so the hand should be posted on June 4th. The topic of Wolff's column is the play of the hand. The bidding in the column is a complex artificial sequence that also arrives at the small slam in spades. Indeed, the hand interested me, because I wondered whether I would have explored slam except for a LTC analysis.

Losing Trick Count (LTC) Evaluation

Count 1 LTC for each missing ace, king, or queen in 3-card or longer suits. Count 1 LTC for each missing ace or king in doubleton suits. Count 1 LTC for every non-ace singleton. Additionally, count 1/2 LTC for every unsupported queen in a 3-card or longer suit.

(continued)

Four Basic Rules of the Losing Trick Count by Bernard Magee

1. Only the first three cards in any suit can be losers.
2. Only the ace, king, and queen are winners.
3. “Droppable Honours” count as losers (i.e. a singleton king or a doubleton queen)
4. The queen counts as half a loser except when in combination with ace, king or jack.

See:

www.mrbridge.co.uk/library/LTC_1.pdf

www.mrbridge.co.uk/library/LTC_2.pdf

P.S. **Hugon** gave a lesson to mentees about LTC this spring and his notes may be found on the website.

Ian presented a lesson on Bergen Hand Evaluation to the unit and the notes are also found on the website.

Review the notes—learn the process—practice with your partner—and enjoy the improved results!



UNIT 191 WEBSITE

If you are only accessing the website to see bridge results, you are missing out on valuable information!!! Our webmaster, **Marc Goldberg**, maintains the site and keeps it up to date. The information is presented in a graphically pleasing manner and the site is easy to navigate. In addition to learning what is happening or has happened in the unit, you also have access to: Unit 191 members with phone numbers; the list of board members and how to contact each of them; board minutes; photos from unit events; an archive of all the past Alert newsletters; a section recognizing players' rank changes and welcoming new members to the unit; an explanation of the mentoring program and access to all the lessons given at the games; plus a listing of upcoming tournaments in the area. **IT'S ALL THERE—DON'T MISS OUT!**



Newcomers Nuplicate Barometer on Wednesdays, 10-Noon

We invite you to join our Nuplicate Barometer sessions held on Wednesdays from 10 AM to noon. During these sessions, you will play 6 to 8 hands and engage in discussions about bidding, declarer play, and defense in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. This is a great opportunity to learn and improve your game!



UNIT MEMBERSHIP REPORT FOR JUNE-JULY 2025

There are 467 members in Unit 191

We welcome new players to our unit:

John Buckwalter

Sheelagh Crowley

Esther Poza

Kathy Coburn



Congratulations to Unit members who have achieved a new rank:

Mary Kruter—Junior Master

Eileen Schmitz—Junior Master

Robert Thomas—Junior Master

Stanley Wilson—Regional Master

Paul Cornwell—Regional Master

Grada Arble—Sapphire life Master

Wayne Ohlrich—Sapphire Life Master

Martin Causley—Sapphire Life Master



ASKING FOR SPECIFIC KINGS IS BEST

#3 in the series on Keycard Blackwood –BY KAY JOYCE

It's not quite time to give up on the real deal! To master Keycard Blackwood and benefit from all the bells and whistles, you need to learn how to show ***specific kings***, not just how many. In previous articles, (last two months), I have covered asking for keycards and asking for the queen (when the answer wasn't "built in" with a 5H or 5S response). Now it is time for the final piece in the puzzle. You know you have enough keycards to keep going, you have the queen or you know that partner does, and you need to know whether partner has enough/or the right kings to bid a little higher perhaps, like 6NT or 7 of something.

Thus far, we have learned that after a response to 4NT, the next step is the "Queen ask," meaning the important queen of trumps, of course! If the response was 5H or 5S, the queen info is given so forget that step.

Example. Our suit is spades:

4S	4NT
5C	5D - is the queen ask

Suppose you have the queen and don't need it for that; partner is not a mind reader, however. You, as asker, have to keep in mind that partner is trying to give correct answers to the questions you ask. If you bid 5D, partner thinks you are asking for the queen. If you have it, you don't need to do that.

SO, you skip over that step and use 5H to ***ask for kings***.

One at a time, please! That's the new wrinkle.

When "asker" doesn't ask about the queen, responder should forget about the queen and assume asker knows what she/he is doing. (He/she has it or has so many that he/she isn't worried about it.)

I hope that I will show you during this article what an improvement asking for specific kings

is over asking for number of kings.

Answers:

The king of trumps is already accounted for by the first round response after 4NT, so it is not a king that you would show.

Our suit is spades:

5H—asking for kings

5S—I don't have any kings (except possibly the trump king, which you already know about!)

5NT—I have the heart king (this is the really hard step, but it is very economical. Partner has used hearts to ask, and it would be counterproductive to you to go all the way to 6H and use up all that room, so you show the suit that partner used to ask by bidding 5NT

6C—I have the club king, no heart king

6D— I have the diamond king, no heart or club king

Let's practice this some: our suit is diamonds and we're always going to be as economical as possible, going "up the line."

4NT - 5C - 5D sign off

5H - queen ask

5S - king ask 5NT = spade king

6C - club king, no spade king

6H—heart king, no spade or club king

What we are doing is showing one king, our lowest one. If partner wants to know more, he keeps asking.....

Diamonds are trumps

4NT - 5C

5S - 5NT - spade king

Asker likes it that you have the spade king, but really wants to know if you have the heart king as well. Her hand is:

Ax - AQJx - KQxxxx - A

She doesn't really care about the club king, holding stiff ace, but would really like to know if you have the heart king. She could bid a grand slam in diamonds. How does "asker" ask for the heart king?

This brings us to a very important concept.

Asker always asks. Never any "role reversal"; asker doesn't start telling, but always remains in the role of "asker".

6C—Do you have the king of clubs?

6H—Do you have the king of hearts?

On this hand, asker only wants to know about the King of hearts, so she would skip 6C (asking about the club king) and 6D (sign off).

To ask about the heart king, bid 6H?

You have 2 possible answers:

Yes—7D (or 7 of our suit)

No—6 NT (only sensible thing left to bid at the 6 level, because are higher than our suit.)

Review:

Unless responder's first response was 5H or 5S.

A step has to be built in for the "Queen ask." Keeping with that scenario, the next step will be the "king ask." If neither of these steps interfere with a "sign-off" in our suit, you must skip our suit as a possible step.

Example: Our suit is diamonds.....

4N - 5C (1 or 4)

5D - our possible sign-off (in case we needed to)

5H - queen ask

5S - king ask

This has been the hard part of asking for kings. Let's move on to the easy part.

Our suit is spades.....

4N - 5H (2 without the queen)

5S - sign off

5N - king ask

6C - I have the king of clubs

6D - I have the king of diamonds but not the king of clubs

6H - I have the king of hearts, but not the king of clubs or diamonds

Let's say the auction, in its early stages, identified spades as trumps, and the asker (4NT bidder) held:

AQJxx Ax AQxxx x

She bid 4NT

5H - 2 without the queen of trumps (asker can tell that the two are the king of spades and the ace of clubs; ergo, they have all of the keycards, plus she is holding the queen of spades. She would like to know more, so....

5N - 5N - asking for kings

6D - I have the king of diamonds, but not the king of clubs.

Opener thinks, "Well, that's all right, I don't care about the king of clubs, since I have a singleton, and the king of hearts would work really well for me..."

6H - Do you have the king of hearts?

NO, 6S, I don't have the heart king

YES, 7S, I have the heart king

As you can see, bidding a grand slam with confidence is NOT beyond the realm of possibility!

On this hand, let's talk about why showing "Specific" kings so valuable.

If over the answer of 5H, if asker had bid 5 NT, asking how many kings responder held, she would get the answer of 2 (6H).

Well, which 2 makes all the difference. There is no bidding a grand slam without the king of diamonds. Being on a finesse is not good enough. Far too risky to bid a 50-50 grand slam!

The king of clubs would be fine for a heart discard, but the king of diamonds is a must.

In the old fashioned way of asking for number of kings, there is no way to ask “which ones?”

If you are working on partnership with a favorite partner or a spouse, learning the full Keycard system can be fun, challenging, and rewarding (Matchpointwise). If not, just ask casual partners, “Do you show number of kings or specific kings?” Most choose to show number, and that settles that! Move along, Douglas, as they used to say in LA Law.

Thank you Kay, for sharing this information with the unit. Kay taught this class in Raleigh and Durham—and the class was well attended. We appreciate this bridge knowledge.

FROM THE ARCHIVES.....10 YEARS AGO....SUMMER 2015

1. **Chris and Tammy Moll** took over ownership of Triangle Bridge.
2. The Bridge Academy officially opened at its new location 2634 Chapel Hill Blvd. in Durham. The grand opening was held on July 27 with 34 tables in attendance. **Robin Marin** provided lunch.
3. **Paul and Ruth Ann Schwenke** have moved their Friday afternoon game to the Bridge Academy location.
4. The Chapel Hill Bridge Club a 0-199 game has been formed and is managed and directed by **Linda Harris**.
5. The Durham Bridge Club, managed and directed by **John Torrey**, will meet at Triangle Bridge 2 times weekly.
6. **Henry Meguid** was named a Master Teacher at the ABTA convention held in Chicago.

To make the game of bridge a pleasant experience for everyone, the following suggestions are made to enhance the enjoyment of the game:

1. Be a good “host” or “guest” at the table.
2. Greet others with kindness and respect.
3. Praise the bidding and/or play of the opponents—especially meaningful to newer players.
4. Have two clearly completed convention cards readily available to the opponents (this is a regulation, not just a nicety).

