



Cambs & Hunts Bridge



Newsletter Number 33

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The next newsletter is scheduled to appear on **30th April**. Please try to get copy to us no later than **15th April**. All contributions welcome!



This and previous newsletters can be found on the County Web page, whose URL is given above.



In this issue we have an anonymous contribution from a self-confessed, but now reformed, diabolical cheat. Sheila Parker receives an unusually sympathetic response from Aunt Agony, while Chris Jagger's legendary diplomatic skills mediate in a discussion of when to double part-scores. There is the usual round-up of News and Results, including the annual report from the Thursday Club. Finally, learn how blocking your running suit can gain you two tricks!



Competition: ±600

South leads $\diamond 10$, to the J, 7 and 2.

I asked Australian international Cathy Chua for a 'tip' for the C & H bulletin. She advises "Never play six card suits in 2NT. Those suits either make lots of tricks or none."

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|--|---|--|--|
| <p>♠ AKJ1096</p> <p>♥ Q84</p> <p>♦ J3</p> <p>♣ 42</p> | <table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">N</td><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">S</td><td style="padding: 2px 5px;"> </td></tr> </table> | W | N | E | | S | | <p>♠ 2</p> <p>♥ 953</p> <p>♦ K62</p> <p>♣ AKJ953</p> |
| W | N | E | | | | | | |
| | S | | | | | | | |

This certainly has a plausible ring to it. Of course, there's a big difference between lots and none. But if you're going off in 100s, you may at least have the chance of a big score. For example, how would you play the hand opposite?

Once you lose the lead, opponents have 9 winners to cash, so you're going to score +600 or about -600. Please send your recommendation for the best line to either editor.

West opens $1\spadesuit$ at game all, East responds $2\clubsuit$ and declares 3NT, with silent opposition.

You may include analysis, or just send us a vote. Suitable prizes will be awarded for the majority choice.

Letter to Aunt Agony:

Dear Auntie,

Playing in a Swiss Teams at the Cambridge Bridge Club recently I held the South cards below at unfavourable vulnerability. LHO opened 1♦ and partner overcalled 2NT (unusual.) RHO passed and it was my turn. My hand looked pretty good opposite hearts and clubs but we had not discussed sequences after UNT except to agree that the overcaller's hand would be either weak or strong but not in the middle.

For want of anything better I bid 3♦, LHO passed and partner bid 4♦. Now was crunch time: what to do? I jumped to 6♣ and this was not a success, the full hand being

| | | |
|----------|-----------|----------|
| Dealer W | ♠ – | N/S Vul |
| | ♥ AK9872 | |
| | ♦ 2 | |
| | ♣ 1098762 | |
| ♠ K109 | | ♠ J87532 |
| ♥ J6 | | ♥ Q1053 |
| ♦ KQJ765 | | ♦ 9 |
| ♣ Q4 | | ♣ K3 |
| | ♠ AQ64 | |
| | ♥ 4 | |
| | ♦ A10843 | |
| | ♣ AJ5 | |

This would have made if clubs had been 3-1 with a singleton honour and hearts no worse than 4-2, or if clubs were 2-2 and hearts 3-3, as I was able to cash the ♣A early; then if an honour had dropped I would have been able to ruff 2 hearts in hand. Alas this was not to be. A spade lead gave me a small extra chance, but when in with the ♣K, opposition led a diamond to break up any squeeze chances. Team-mates were seriously unimpressed as they had made 2♠ as E/W for +110 and were

confidently expecting to gain on the board. Where did we go wrong?

Yours,

Sheila Parker



Dear Niece,

Do you seriously expect me to publish a hand in my column where there have not been at least 6 atrocities committed? Perhaps I can get to six somehow.

Whilst one could not argue too strongly against the first two calls, the following actions do stand out somewhat:

1. The 4♦ bid is clearly bizarre – did partner feel that with a singleton diamond and four top honours in clubs missing, that you would be interested in this second round control? Or that his clubs were as good as his hearts? Did partner think that a seven count qualified as the strong type – I shudder to think what the weak type would look like.
 2. Given this bid, one must seriously question your judgement in agreeing to play with this partner.
 3. 6♣ was a lazy underbid – clearly the grand slam could be on, and one ought at least to give partner the chance of bidding this.
 4. 6♣ was a risky overbid. One of the keys to bidding is to play to your partner's strengths, or in this case, weaknesses – 5♣ was plenty.
 5. Another key to winning bridge is know your opposition. 5♣ would be in some danger on bad breaks – it must be better to go for the safe plus in 3♣. No doubt teammates would have been very happy with 6 IMPs in.
 6. Your final error on the hand – some would say your first – is that I would guess you were partnering some blithering newsletter editor.
- Yours charmingly, Aunt Agony.
[It wasn't either of us! (eds)]

Doubling opponents and not splitting partners by Chris Jagger

I was recently intending to give a lesson on opening leads to a very keen couple, but before we started they asked me about a recent disaster they'd had. The auction had gone 1NT-2♦-X-2♥, P-P-X-P, P-P, the 2♦ bid being a transfer. The contract made, and the inevitable recriminations had started. One careless comment from me could have destroyed a happy marriage!

Whilst thinking "The 1NT bid was impeccable, and the final pass would be hard to quarrel with, but as for the three calls in between..." I prevaricated with "This is actually a difficult sequence." Clearly the carefully prepared opening leads lesson would have to wait for another day!

I soon ascertained there were two problems – for one thing they did not know what their doubles meant, and secondly they didn't know when they should be trying to penalise the opponents.

So when should you aim to penalise opponents? What people need is an easy rule of thumb, a bit like deciding when to open 1NT. For that you would no doubt use point count, and the shape of the hand. In other situations you might well use my favourite hand evaluation method (for my opponents) – losing trick count.

To decide whether to double the opponents you need two things – point count, and number of trumps. My simple rule is that if you have the balance of the points, then double the opponents at the two level if you and your partner have at least six trumps between you. Don't double if you have four or fewer, and usually don't with five trumps. If they are at the three level, reduce the number of trumps

required to double by one, and by another one if they are at the four level.

This rule relies on the idea that generally speaking, the greater the trump fit, the more tricks people make. It obviously depends a bit on the hand – with AKQJxxxx xxx x x if the auction starts 1NT-3♥ they may only have an eight card fit, but with such a fine source of tricks, this is the time to ignore the rule and simply bid 4♠. However, with a 3334 11 count, just double them. If it's wrong, save your marriage by blaming me.

If the auction started 1NT-2♥, you now have very little room to establish how many trumps you have – you are inevitably going to have to guess a bit. However, if people are kindly playing transfers for you, it gives you the chance to have a dialogue with partner. With ten points or more, you know you have the balance of the points, and you can proceed as follows over 2♦.

With one trump or none, bid 2♥ – showing a good hand but no desire to take a penalty. With four or more trumps, pass 2♦ and hope to get another chance next round to double 2♥ – which is unconditionally for penalties.

With two or three trumps, start off with a double of 2♦. If your partner has four trumps, he will double 2♥, knowing that you have six trumps between you. If he has three trumps, he will pass, letting you decide whether to double or not, which you will do with three trumps (with only two trumps you bid a suit, or cuebid 3♥, or perhaps bid no trumps). If opener has only two trumps, he bids a suit, or passes, and then pulls if his partner doubles – knowing that opponents have an eight card fit he will not defend 2♥ doubled.

Results Round Up

In the **Eastern Counties League**, the County has had a very strong start to the season and is 1st or 2nd in all divisions after five matches. Against Northants the results were 13-7, 19-1, 14-6, whilst against the University 11-9, 16-4, 20-0.

In the **County Knockout** preliminary round, HARKER bt HARRISON, LARLHAM bt MONROE, BIRDSALL bt MAN. In Round 2, JAGGER bt HARKER, JONES bt COLLIER, MILMAN bt JACOBSBERG, LARLHAM bt HOWARD, RILEY bt RICHER, BROWN bt CARMICHAEL, BIRDSALL bt WOODRUFF.

In Round 3 MILMAN bt BROWN.

Newmarket Swiss Teams

1. Larlham, Kendrick, Orde-Powlett, Warren
 2. Milman, Stelmashenko, Burrows, Burrows
 3. Gerloch Knight Wadsworth North-Graves
 4. Jacobsberg, Caldwell, Howard, Campbell
- Please note that next year's event will be on Sunday 26th October to avoid the clash with the Seniors.

The county came a disappointing fourth in the **Tollemache Qualifier**, drawn in a tough group with Surrey, Manchester and Middlesex, all counties that would normally expect to make the final.

Garden Cities Qualifier

1. University
2. Cambridge A
3. Thursday
4. Cambridge B
5. Saffron Walden
6. Balsham

Cambridge A were leading at half time, but lost to Cambridge B!

Catherine Jagger's team won the **National Women's Teams**, winning every set. David

Kendrick came second in the **Great Northern Swiss Pairs**. Nadia Stelmashenko and Victor Milman came 3rd in the Mixed Pairs at the **Year End** congress.

Around the Clubs:

Thursday: Another good year for our club! At the October AGM, the following annual awards were presented. It was entirely appropriate that the President's shield was won by our club President!

President's shield: Sue Oram **Mackenzie trophies:** Sally Dempster & Colin Fuller **Orchard Pairs trophies:** Brian Copping & Michael Tedham **Doric cup (Individual Ladder:)** Gladys Gittins **Fry trophies:** Ken Jackson & David Man, Ken & Sheila Barker **Swan shields:** Joanne Caldwell & Ian McDonald **St John candlesticks:** John & Rosemary Bissett **Unusual Partner Pairs:** Gladys Gittins & Fred Allen

At the same meeting, members approved the purchase of a Duplimate dealing machine, which is now in operation. Judging by the noise level at the tables when the first boards dealt by the machine were used, some interesting hands have already been produced!

We continue to meet – on Thursdays – at Grange Road, Cambridge. Visitor pairs are welcome at most of our events, details of which may be found at our club website, www.geocities.com/thursdaybridge The 2003 programme, latest results (updated weekly) and the club ladder competition are all to be found here. Alternatively please call the club secretary, Michael Soames (01223 880011).

Cottenham: The Club Teams was won by Ann Aplin, David Larman, Zona Lacy and Ted Shaw. The Evans Handicap Cup was won by Claire Hutchinson & Derek Oxbrow.

I no longer want to know by A (nearly) lost soul

This shameful tale begins last year, when one wild, wintery, windswept weekend I agreed to play for a Cambridge University Alumni team against our Oxford counterparts. The previous year we had thoroughly thrashed a fairly weak team, and it was suggested to us that perhaps we had taken the encounter too seriously. So it was a scratch team of County members current and past, thrown together in expectation of a casual and cordial encounter, who rolled their way westwards.

But when we arrived, the fiendish false-ness of our fearsome foes was revealed as they unfurled a team including internationals Sheehan & Ockendon and Landy & Smith. Furthermore, they had suborned a current Cambs & Hunts player onto their side with the meager excuse that she had attended Oxford University in her (obviously misspent) youth.

As though these underhand tactics weren't enough, they had even agreed to meet one of our players, Frances Hinden, at the railway station and drive her to the venue. But Ms Hinden wasn't born yesterday, and realising that this could all be part of a plan to make her miss the match, thwarted this dastardly, devious device by donning a disguise, fleeing the station through another exit and leaving her escort gnashing his knuckles.

Now I would be the first to admit that it's only a game. And of course I only play for fun. But the fact is, the fun's in winning.

So as we sat down against these people, I was in a mighty mean mood. I hadn't won a bridge event for some time. I felt, in the depths of my soul, "OOOo, I really, really hope we win this match. I'd give *anything* to win!"

There was no resounding thunderclap; no fitting flash of forked lightning; but there is no

doubt that the skies darkened as the afternoon wore on.

And we did win. Things went well from start to finish. Strong players took phantom sacrifices; they failed to cash obvious tricks against doomed contracts... in short, we had the devil's own luck.

So, smiling smugly and smarmily, I wandered back through the centre of Oxford, passing purposelessly the various Colleges until, I found myself outside "All Souls'." Peering in, I saw a black-clad figure in a bowler hat, who blithely beckoned in my direction.

"Have we met?" I enquired. "Not yet; I am the porter of all souls," he intoned. "As you surmised, I contributed somewhat to your success today. And now I have a proposition for you."

Well, I know this all sounds like a clumsy cliché. And I know from the film 'The Seventh Seal' that Chess rather than Bridge is traditionally the Mephistophelean pastime, but I wonder why. Anyway, the upshot of this Faustian encounter was that I was offered for a trial period of one week, a pair of glasses which enabled me to read people's minds at the bridge table. With these, I could hardly lose, the porter persuaded me. And in return for these spectacular spectacles, all he wanted was some minor metaphysical attribute of my corporal being.

With hindsight, it was indeed fortunate that I had heard of deals like this in the past. In the various trashy tall tales that you read in magazines, newsletters and the like, these diabolical devices never seem to be quite as useful as you had imagined. So I insisted on the one week 'sale or return' clause.

Thus it was, that on All Souls' Day this year, I turned up at the Cambridge club equipped with the wherewithall for mind-reading resting on my nubile nose. And what a revelation that proved.

First of all, you wouldn't believe how boring other people's thoughts are. Yes, it may be important to you Sheila what your kids are doing while you're playing bridge, but frankly, I don't care. And yes Julian, I know my hair is turning grey. And apparently half the club genuinely don't know which one is Jenny and which one Joanne. And perhaps some of you reading this are worried that your tawdry little secrets are now known to me. Rest assured, none of the bridge world cares about your petty peccadillos away from the table – they can hardly be worse than the ones you commit in full view of us all.

Doesn't anyone concentrate while playing bridge? It was a real effort disentangling the "I think he threw a middling red card on the second spade – or was it the third?" from the "Am I missing anything good on the box tonight?" and the "I really shouldn't have told him that 'hot dog' joke last night, but he does go on and on about his precious pooch all the time – why's everyone looking at me – should I apologise to him – oh it's me to play."

Now I know you're all thinking "what a cheat" – but I wasn't being unethical. I only read my partner's mind after the play of the hand. (And I'm certainly not going to play with HIM again, the arrogant, condescending so-and-so.) It is, after all, quite legitimate to use opponents' demeanour to try to work out what they hold. I was just using a more precise tool for card-placing than we usually have. Of course, after the play I was well-placed to analyse the hands, but that's what cured me from this ill-judged enterprise.

Towards the end of the evening, I was West against a strong pair on this hand.

| | | |
|---------------|----------|----------|
| All Souls Eve | ♠ KJxx | Dealer E |
| | ♥ Axx | |
| | ♦ Q10xx | |
| | ♣ AJ | |
| ♠ Q10x | | ♠ Axxx |
| ♥ J108x | | ♥ – |
| ♦ xxx | | ♦ AKJx |
| ♣ 964 | | ♣ Q10852 |
| | ♠ xx | |
| | ♥ KQ9xxx | |
| | ♦ xx | |
| | ♣ K73 | |

| East | South | West | North |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| 1♣ | 2♥* | P | 3♣* |
| P | 3♥ | all | pass |

Now if any of you are thinking of cashing in your immortal what's-it for some glamorous glasses, let me tell you that the only good thing about the deal, is that you don't have to think about your own boring cards – you can always look at the big hands. I didn't have to spend the entire hand staring at my typical 3 count, with a trump trick, it's true. So I led my middle club, dummy went down and I looked into declarer's mind. The relevant thoughts went something like this:

"Was I right to sign off? Six heart tricks, two clubs and a ruff and then game's on the spade finesse into the opener's hand. Non-vulnerable, we did well to stay out of it. Bet we lose a game swing though. Oh well let's see who's got the ♣Q. Jack please."

So declarer won ♣K, unblocked ♣A and led a heart to the king. As partner discarded, I switched on the glasses again:

A mental block by Chris Jagger

One of the funniest defences I have had the pleasure to be involved in recently was the following – as usual, with some instructive points. Please spot the errors as they occur – bearing in mind that West was being paid to avoid East’s errors!

| | | | | | | |
|----------|--|---------|---|---|---|--------|
| Dealer S | ♠ AJ65 | E/W Vul | | | | |
| | ♥ AQ3 | | | | | |
| | ♦ 107 | | | | | |
| | ♣ 10962 | | | | | |
| ♠ K32 | <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> </table> | W | N | S | E | ♠ 1084 |
| W | N | | | | | |
| S | E | | | | | |
| ♥ J1042 | | ♥ 85 | | | | |
| ♦ Q962 | | ♦ AJ843 | | | | |
| ♣ Q5 | | ♣ A74 | | | | |
| | ♠ Q97 | | | | | |
| | ♥ K976 | | | | | |
| | ♦ K5 | | | | | |
| | ♣ KJ83 | | | | | |

A Stayman auction led to South declaring 2NT on the ♦2 lead. East won and returned the ♦4 to the king, West following with the six. Declarer crossed to a heart and played the ♣10. East rose with the ace, and returned the ♦J. West overtook and cashed ♦9, declarer pitching two spades from each hand.

The defence had brilliantly blocked the suit, so now West led ♠2. Declarer rose with the ace, and confidently finessed the club, losing to the bare queen. East now cashed his ♠K and put partner in with ♠10 to cash his fifth diamond, for three down, and no doubt two tricks more than anybody else in the room!

Before reading on, decide what mistakes were made.

Declarer played the hand pretty well, but made one error, He was correct not to finesse the spade, which might have led to one down in a cold contract had the king been offside.

Where he erred was in throwing the second spade from dummy, as it could never cost to throw a club instead. Following the defence’s lead, he too had a mental block as to the lie of the hand, and was careless as a result.

What of East? He actually committed three errors – the second was rising with the ♣A, which could have dropped his partner’s queen. The third was the blocking play in diamonds. The first though was at trick two, when he should have returned the ♦3. Conventional wisdom is that you return your original fourth highest in the suit. However, this is completely wrong. In this case the four leaves partner uncertain as to whether you started with A4, A43, AJ84, or AJ843 – not a very useful card! Returning the lowest is less confusing – admittedly he will still not know whether you have two, four or five cards in the suit. But he does know that you don’t have three, so he can cash his top one when he gets in, which will be what you want him to do.

And West? I admit to being West – and I considered unblocking the ♦9 under the king. It felt as though partner probably had five, and it would cater for partner’s spectacular play of the jack. On the other hand it would look particularly stupid if partner had A43, and if he had AJ84 there would be some hope that I might be able to cash the fourth diamond retaining the lead, and then have a better chance of finding the right switch. My view at the time was that it was right not to unblock, but I leave that for you to decide.

Finally let’s award some ‘results merchant points’ (the biggest crime in bridge!) Two for anybody who thought declarer ought to have dropped the doubleton ♣Q, and one to those who thought he should have taken the spade finesse.