



Cambs & Hunts Bridge



Newsletter Number 36

30 December 2003

Editors: **Chris Jagger**, 2 Wycliffe Road, Cambridge CB1 3JD, Tel: 01223-526586 and
Jonathan Mestel, 180 Queen's Gate, London SW7 2BZ, Tel: 01223-329671.

E-mail: ajm8@cam.ac.uk or christopher.jagger@deloitte.co.uk

Web page: <http://www.cambsbridge.org.uk>

Items for the Web page should be sent to David Allen on david@djallen.org.uk

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!



The County warmly welcomes Ian Pagan to its ranks. The editorial team eagerly awaits his first Newsletter article. . .

An impressive display of masochistic stamina enabled Gareth Birdsall & Sonia Zakrzewski to enter the Guinness book of records for partaking in the longest continuous card game (72 hours.) We had hoped for an article about the event, but apparently they're still sleeping it off.

With an extraordinary late spurt (58/60 VPs in the last 3 matches) the County qualified for the final stages of the Tollemache. This is a suitable place to scotch the rumour that overnight even NPC Chris Larlham had some doubts as to whether the team could pull it off. We are reliably informed that in fact his faith never faltered for an instant.



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



In this issue Don McFarlane reports on the sad passing of Alastair Brodie. John Turner analyses whether to use Stayman on 4-4-4-1 hands and Chris Jagger is doubly positive about negative doubles. Annette Gerloch writes to the editor and Paul Littlewood to Aunt Agony. Jonathan Mestel was so bemused by the play of a hand in Derby that he could only explain it by plagiarising Victor Mollo. There is a brief report on the Tolle and the usual round-up of News and Results.



The Griffins visit Derby *by* Jonathan Mestel

(With apologies to Victor Mollo)

“What a dull session,” bemoaned Papa the Greek, as the Griffins congregated in a small Italian restaurant between sessions at the Derby Swiss pairs. “I’ve never seen so many flat boards. Scarcely an occasion arose for me to demonstrate the full extent of my technical prowess.”

“That shouldn’t require too many,” quipped Colin the Corgi, the Cambridge graduate who frequently mistook himself for witty.

“Papa, Papa,” murmured the Hog through a mouthful of Crostini. “Is ever a board truly flat? You neglect, as always, the human factor. In the hands of a master,” – here the Hog paused modestly to help himself to another breadstick – “no hand is devoid of possibilities. And you underestimate, as always, the ability of our colleagues to generate swings in a roundabout sort of way.” Here he nodded at the Rueful Rabbit, whose ears adopted a Burgundy hue, and at Walter the Walrus, who was studiously counting the items on the menu.

“How did you get on on Board 23?” the Hog continued mischievously.

“A good example,” said Papa. “–670. I assess it as slightly below average, because not everyone plays weak twos.”

“Ah,” beamed the Hog. “Yes, I suppose it might make. At our table it was one down, and might have been two down. Or plus one. I was playing with my favourite partner, RR,

against the Secretary Bird and Walter:

Dealer N	♠ A4	Both Vul
	♥ J8763	
	♦ 42	
	♣ K654	
♠ 10		♠ K875
♥ AK10		♥ Q52
♦ J983		♦ K107
♣ AJ1032		♣ Q97
	♠ QJ9632	
	♥ 94	
	♦ AQ65	
	♣ 8	

SB	HH	WW	RR
P	P	2♠*	X
P	P	P	

“We had the same auction,” snapped Papa. “Declarer has 5 trump tricks, two diamond tricks and a ruff. No other result is possible. A good board for the weak two.”

“Well, not quite. I opened 2♥ as North,” began Colin the Corgi, a devotee of the “rule of 1700” preemptive school. But his story was drowned out by the shocked silence which greeted this admission.

“What happened, HH?” interjected Oscar the Owl hurriedly. The Hog turned to me: “You were Kibbitzing – you tell them,” and reached over to borrow the Crostini from an adjoining table.

I was sitting behind the Rabbit, who led ♥K. At this point the Walrus, who was never happy opening even at the 1-level with fewer than 13 points, grunted “I suppose you’ve got no trumps, partner.” The Secretary Bird,

who was in context quite proud of his hand, responded “I’ve two – no trumps indeed!”

The Rabbit’s ears flushed crimson. He hadn’t been concentrating. He’d thought the contract was 2♠, not 2NT. What would the Hog say? He’d made the wrong lead. How fortunate that he still had an entry. Quickly he switched to ♣J, the correct honour card from that holding. When that held the trick, he continued with ♣10. Things were working out well. Declarer would duck again, he’d lead a club to partner’s queen, and he’d shown partner where his entry lay with his opening lead! A deceptive masterpiece; he could hear the Hog’s plaudits already. His reverie was shattered when the Walrus ruffed ♣10, and cunningly led ♠9.

“In case of a singleton king,” was his enigmatic explanation when I later asked why he’d chosen that particular card.

The ♠10 was covered by the ace and ♠Q finessed. At this point the Walrus led his last heart. The Rabbit pounced on that with ♠A and attempted to give partner a heart ruff. But it was declarer who ruffed, while the Hog dropped the ♠Q and ♣Q on the table in unison.

“Penalty card!” shouted the Secretary Bird, who had hitherto lain dormant.

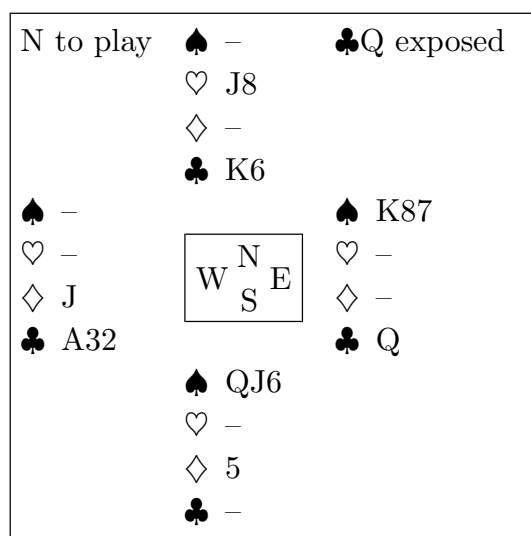
“Eh, what?” started the bemused Walrus. “No no, I couldn’t take advantage of an accident.”

“A noble sentiment,” inclined the Hog, “However, you have a duty...”

“...both towards partner and to the other players in the tournament,” concluded the SB sternly.

Thus it was that the ♣Q lay exposed on the table, while declarer played ♠A and ruffed a diamond. All WW needed to do to earn two more tricks was lead a winning heart in this

position:



But ♣Q smiled up at him enticingly from the table. Hadn’t he a duty to use her? And he knew from the earlier play that HH held ♣A, so he could make an overtrick! He led ♣K and the HH ruefully followed with ♣Q. WW discarded a diamond, and fell off his chair when RR won ♣A. The Hog ruffed the ♠9 low and made the last two tricks with ♠K8.

Papa sat dazed throughout my recital. “Ha ha,” chortled the Hog. “So you see, the board was not at all flat. At trick 1, declarer had 8 tricks. At trick 2 the ♣K could have been his 9th. The, um, imaginative lead of ♠9 brought the total down to 7. Exiting with the heart, rather than taking a diamond ruff brought the count down to 6, as I could win with ♠Q and exit with a low trump. RR’s ♠A brought the total up to 7, if he continues with a diamond, but when he established dummy’s hearts, it was 8 again. And there it would have remained had I not had the presence of mind – ” at this the Hog faltered somewhat. “Er, I mean the absence of mind, to drop, carelessly yet perhaps fortuitously, the ♣Q on the table.”

The main course finally arrived, just as the Hog finished the last breadstick. “You see, Papa. The Human Factor. Never forget the human factor. And maybe I too am human.”

A Primer on Negative Doubles *by* Chris Jagger

Negative doubles occur when partner opens the bidding with a natural suit bid, and opponents make a natural overcall at any level. Most people nowadays play negative doubles, but it is surprising how many of those are unaware of the basics.

Strength:

A negative double shows 6+ points at the one level, about 8+ at the two level, and 10+ at higher levels. There is *no upper limit* to the strength of a negative double.

If in doubt as to whether you have the strength for a negative double, look at your shape, and consider what might happen if you do not make a negative double. For example, it starts $1\heartsuit-2\clubsuit$, and you have a seven count with 4432 shape. This is a clear negative double. Although a little light in values, you have nearly the strength, and would much prefer to let partner choose a suit than yourself.

Shape:

If partner opens a minor and they bid a major, or partner opens a major and they bid a minor, then the double usually shows four cards in the unbid major. For example, $1\clubsuit-1\heartsuit-X$ would show exactly four spades, whilst bidding $1\spadesuit$ here would guarantee five. This is because you can freely bid $1\spadesuit$ without showing extra values. $1\clubsuit-1\spadesuit-X$ shows at least four hearts, though it may be more hearts, but only if the hand is too weak to bid $2\heartsuit$ (eg Ax Q109xxx xxx xx – provided that the bidding does not get too high you will later bid hearts to show a weak hand with a long heart suit). Similarly it denies a strong hand with five diamonds and four hearts – with that you would start off by bidding $2\diamonds$.

$1\clubsuit-1\diamonds-X$ shows 4-4 in the majors. $1\diamonds-2\clubsuit-X$ implies at least one four card major, though may well not have both. $1\heartsuit-1\spadesuit-X$ is in principle showing the minors but may well just be conveying some values.

In each case you can bend the rules if you are likely to be able to survive later in the auction. If it starts $1\heartsuit-1\spadesuit$, you can afford to double with a weak hand with six diamonds, intending to convert clubs to diamonds. If it starts $1\spadesuit-2\diamonds$, you can afford to double without four hearts if you have three spades – you can later convert back to spades, since if partner has four hearts, he will also have five spades, given that he opened $1\spadesuit$. That is not to say you should bend the rules willy nilly – only do so for a good reason!

The higher the negative double, the less specific it is about shape. Generally a strong hand will never make a negative double with a 5 card suit.

A negative double should never be made with a fit for partner's major, and usually not with a fit for partner's minor at higher levels.

Responding to a negative double:

Most responses are non forcing. For example $1\heartsuit-2\clubsuit-X-P$: here $2\diamonds$, $2\heartsuit$, $2\spadesuit$, $2NT$, $3\heartsuit$ and $3\spadesuit$ would all be non forcing – pretend that partner has responded $1\spadesuit$, and you won't go far wrong.

Continuing after a negative double:

New suits after earlier making a negative double show a weak hand. To introduce a new suit you will obviously want some length in the suit, and with a good hand you would simply have bid the suit straight away. For example, $1\diamonds-1\spadesuit-X-3\spadesuit$, $P-P-4\clubsuit$ will typically be a weak hand with four hearts and six clubs.

Passing rather than doubling:

If you pass an overcall that opponents make, it says that either you haven't got the necessary stuff to take an action, or that you have penalty double of their suit. Several points to note:

1. 1♦-1♥: Do not pass with eg xxx KQx xxx Qxxx. You must bid 1NT on this – otherwise partner will never believe you have these values later on.

2. Pass is not forcing. Instead, the opener should look at his length in their suit to decide whether to reopen with a double. With a doubleton or fewer, he should generally reopen at the one or two level, irrespective of his strength, whilst with a singleton, he should reopen at the three level. If occasionally you pass them out when you have three cards in the suit, and your partner has a penalty double of it, you will be amazed how often it gets you a good score – they probably have a far better contract elsewhere.

3. When deciding to pass, think what action you would take if partner reopens, and on this basis decide whether you would have been better taking some action in the first place. For example, after 1♦-2♣-P-P, X-P what would you bid with a 4432 7 count? Any of three suits could be right, and you have no idea whether 8 tricks is the limit of the hand, or whether game might be on.

4. If you pass and later double, this is showing a penalty double of the suit you passed over.

5. If you reopen with a double and partner passes, this does not necessarily show values – it merely shows that partner felt that defending their suit was likely to be your best result. For example, if it starts 1♠-2♣-P-P, X-P-P-2♥, X, don't be surprised if this makes if you have doubled this with a minimum opening

hand – partner may only have defensive tricks in clubs.

Editor's note: The above is based on negative doubles where if instead you bid a suit it would be forcing (eg 1♣-1♥-1♠ is forcing – though not necessarily strong). It is absolutely clear that this is better than playing non-forcing bids, and having to start with a double with strong hands with a good suit. There are different styles available here as to shape (some genuinely worth playing), but we stick with the commonest.



Results Round Up

Newmarket Swiss Teams: (17 entries)

- 1= M Seaver, A Stenner, C King, K Firth
- 1= M May, N Pimblett, J Caldwell, E Howard
- 3. V Milman, N Stelmashenko, M & P Burrows
- 4= R & S Oakford, D McFarlane, S Parker
- 4= B Last, A Gerloch, S Mealing, P Last
- 6. R & M Chaplin, P Somerfield, M Anderson
- 7. P Markwell, J Spearing, B Barker, A Day
- 8. B & G Gittins, I McDonald, D Carmichael
- 9. C Larlham, D Kendrick, K & J Orde-Powlett
- 10. I Aldridge, M & T Knights, A Hamilton

Newcomers Teams: (7 teams entered)

- 1. B Ford, S Ford, J Paine, D Dubock
- 2. R Cochran, K Ekins, I Lattimore, K Brownlow
- 3. K Fearn, R Katz, P Grice, A Wilkinson
- 4. S Lee, D Fitzjohn, O Richley, G Smith

In the **Eastern Counties League**, the county had results 3-17, 10-10, 11-9 against Northants, 8-12, 17-3, 20-0 against Norfolk, and 17-3, 15-5, 6-14 against the University.

In the **County Knockout** R1: HARRISON bt JACOBSBERG, CARMICHAEL bt JACKSON, HOWARD bt JONES. R2: LAST

Stayman on 4-4-4-1 hands? *by* John Turner

Suppose your partner opens 1NT and you hold a 4441 hand with specifically a singleton club. If you have invitational values or better, no problem really – you just wheel out Stayman (or, if very strong, the Baron convention if you play that) and take it from there. But suppose you have a hand of less than invitational values. Now it is quite tempting to bid Stayman and then pass pard's response. This will work jolly well if pard responds $2\heartsuit/2\spadesuit$; but if pard responds $2\diamond$ you might well be in a 4-3 or even (ugh) a 4-2 fit. Thus, whether Stayman is a good idea on these weaker hands comes down to a question of probabilities. The purpose of this article is to try to assess these probabilities by examining a couple of simplified models of general 1NT opening styles. We will make the commonsense assumption that any 4-4 fit is significantly better than 1NT in this case, a 5-4 fit very much better, a 4-3 fit significantly worse and a 4-2 fit very bad.

Model 1: partner always opens 1NT on any 4333 and 4432 hands in the right point range but never on other hands. (a) If pard is any 4333, he will have 4 spades/hearts/diamonds 75% of the time. Thus you will land in a 4-4 fit 75% of the time, a 4-3 diamond fit the remaining 25% of the time. (b) If pard is any 4432, you are guaranteed to hit a 4-4 fit. (In fact, in the 4432 cases you will end in $2\diamond$ only where pard is 4-4 in the minors, which occurs one-sixth of the time.) Now, 4333 and 4432 hand shapes occur roughly in the ratio 1:2. Thus, putting all this together, we see that employing Stayman will lead to a 4-4 fit 92% of the time and a 4-3 diamond fit only 8%. Stayman is overwhelmingly the winning action.

Model 2: partner always opens 1NT on any 4333, 4432 and 5332 hands in the right point range but never on other hands. The above analysis still holds good for 4333 and 4432. For 5332, as 4333, he will have spades/hearts/diamonds 75% of the time, landing you in a 5-4 fit in those cases. In the remaining 25% of 5332 hands partner will have 5 clubs and either 2 diamonds (one-third of the time) or 3 diamonds (two-thirds). So of the 5332s, you'll land in a 5-4 fit 75% of the time, a 4-3 diamond fit 17% and a 4-2 diamond fit 8%. The relative frequencies of 5332, 4432 and 4333 hands are roughly 3:4:2. Combining all this we see that employing Stayman will lead to a 5-4 fit 25% of the time, a 4-4 fit 61%, a 4-3 diamond fit 11% and a 4-2 diamond fit 3%. As with Model 1, Stayman emerges the clear winner. It's interesting that in Model 2 Stayman leads to an improved contract 86% (25% + 61%) of the time whilst the dreaded 4-2 diamond fit is an almost negligible risk of 3%. It is true, of course, that many people are more likely to open 1NT with a 5card minor than with a 5card major, but that is a question of style and we won't pursue it here.

The conclusion has to be that you should employ Stayman on these weakish 4441 hands and I will definitely do so in future. If it turns out badly, you have the consolation that you took the percentage action – though I can't guarantee that your partner will be supportive.

[Somehow practice isn't quite as convincing! One point to remember is that if we bid to $2\diamond$, opponents know not to compete in a major, whereas if we pass 1NT they may well get into trouble in some As(p)tro sequence. (ed)]

Letter to Aunt Agony

Dear Ms Agony,

I used to play in Cambs in the mid-70s, so I hope I qualify to ask your advice. At love all at pairs, RHO opened 1♥ third in hand. I overcalled 2♦ and was left to play there. How should I have played it on the ♥10 lead?

Best wishes, Paul Littlewood

♠ K		♠ J932						
♥ 9753	<table border="1" style="display: inline-table; 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		♥ A62
W	N	E						
	S							
♦ AKQ105		♦ 743						
♣ Q95		♣ K32						



Dear Paul,

Your Yorkshire relatives told me about you once. We forgive you leaving the County. Assuming diamonds break, you have 5 trumps, a club and a heart. The natural way to try for another trick is to ruff a heart in dummy. In the likely event of LHO ruffing high ahead of dummy, you can discard a club on the 4th heart, and instead try for a club ruff. For this plan, you mustn't draw any trumps in case the defence lead a 3rd round. Say you win ♥A and continue hearts, they win and lead a trump. You win and lead a 3rd heart, they may lead a 2nd trump, you win and try to ruff your 4th heart. If LHO ruffs with the last trump, you throw a club and all is well.

But how likely is LHO to hold 3 trumps? You really ought to have told us more about opponents' system. What strength no trump do they play? If they hold two 4 card suits which one do they tend to open? Do they play weak twos? And crucially, are they playing negative doubles? As these methods are most common, I assume they were playing take-out doubles over 2♦.

There are thus two dogs who did nothing in the night. LHO, who has at least four spades

did not double, so won't have more than a 6 count. He also did not open 2♠, and so is unlikely to have six spades if they were playing weak twos. So RHO will have three or four spades, and yet did not reopen with a double. This strongly suggests that RHO is not short in diamonds. He may be 4-4-3-2, but more probably 3-5-3-2. It is really quite likely that RHO has a doubleton club, in which case the above line will fail. They will win the 2nd heart and draw a round of trumps, win the 3rd heart and lead a 4th for North to ruff. RHO will now sit back and wait to overruff dummy. Or if he holds both aces (and maybe 3 clubs) he could win ♠A and lead a 2nd trump; when he wins ♣A he can lead a 3rd trump.

So how else might you play? Well, you could lead towards the ♠K; if RHO has ♠A but not ♠Q10 he might duck. A bit much to play for. No, if we really think RHO is likely to hold strength and short clubs a more promising line is to play for him to hold ♣Ax right from the start. As we only have one entry, we must lead a club from dummy at trick 2. If ♣Q wins, we draw trumps and duck a round of clubs.

But let's not be in a hurry. If we duck ♥A at trick 1, we shall surely find out more about the hand before committing ourselves. They may give us a count in spades, for example, and we will certainly find out whether RHO has 4 or 5 hearts. Note that the danger of having ♥A ruffed is illusory, if we believe LHO can only hold two trumps. If ♥10 is overtaken and the next heart ruffed, and it goes spade to the ace and another heart ruff, we will be able to draw a few trumps and ruff the 4th heart in dummy before playing RHO for ♣Ax.

Of course, if you don't trust opponents' bidding, you're on your own. Your partner did well not to raise to 3♦, by the way.

Yours ever, Auntie.

It's Tough at the Tolle *by* our editorial staff.

We started well, getting off to 20-0 against a weaker than usual Yorkshire team. Then without seeming to do too much wrong we had three 15-5 (or thereabouts) losses for the rest of the day, firstly against the group favourites Middlesex, who were still playing well at that stage, though later faded away, then against Manchester, who ended up winning the group, and finally against the then leaders, Norfolk, who always looked as if they were capable of fading, and eventually did.

It was the match against Manchester that really seemed unjust. We lost 30 imps when we bid the top spot of 6♣ with AK10x KQxx xx QJx opposite xx – AK10xxx A10xxx, essentially simply requiring the minors to split, and having extra chances if they don't but instead the club finesse is working. Not only was this not the case, but both their pairs missed the slam, and they doubled us for good measure! Fortunately Roger Gibbens played the hand more accurately than they'd bid it, and brought in a tight 6♦ contract, to level things somewhat. Next an excellent vulnerable game simply requiring trumps to be 3-2, went off doubled when they were 5-0, and they rounded things off by finding an excellent though not obvious lead against us to defeat a 3NT contract that was making everywhere else.

Overnight we were 5 VPs below average, and looked almost dead and buried. I was still being optimistic – “all we need is 55/60 and the other teams not to do too well and we will still qualify.”

Suddenly the boards started coming our way. First board on Sunday was a 22 count grand.

It was beyond us bidding the grand, but the small slam started the flood of imps our way. Two boards later Ian Pagan pushed on to 4♥, and after two excellent guesses, emerged with ten tricks. Was it a good score? Well it was worth 8 and 9 imps, but nothing compared to the 800 collected by our teammates when their oppo bid to 4♠!

Next board we had x Axxx AKJxxx KJ opposite Kxxx x Q10xxx Axx. The auction went 1♠-X-P-3♦, P-4♠-P-5♣, 6♦. The key part of the auction was over 4♠. Partner is showing a singleton spade and asking you for your opinion. You should not just cue automatically. Thus 5♣ shows suitability, allowing partner to bid the slam. You might argue that the king opposite the singleton is not a good card, but the key is the singleton heart, which is clearly likely to be useful to partner. Was this a good score? Well it was worth a slam swing, but nothing compared to the 1400 collected by our teammates out of 5♠ doubled! Life can be tough in the Tolle!

That provided an 18-2 win, and the next match was a crushing 20-0. At the same time a key development occurred between leaders Norfolk, and second placed Manchester. The latter collected 20-0, which looked like it was the wrong way round for our purposes. It left us still 5 VPs adrift of second place Norfolk, needing a big win, and Norfolk not to get a big win themselves. Another crushing 20-0 victory pushed us up to 93 VPs, and as news filtered in that Norfolk had lost heavily, it dawned on me that I'd have to write yet another Tolle article for the newsletter, and drag myself along to the final in February.