

Victorian Bridge Association Bulletin

March 2006

Editors: Ian McCance & Bill Jacobs



The Commonwealth Nations Bridge Championships will be held this month.

The official web site is:
<http://www.cnbc.com.au/>

Highlights:

- Opening Ceremony to be held at Raheen in Kew, the spectacular home of Jeannie and Richard Pratt, with the event to be officially opened by John Thwaites, Deputy Premier of Victoria.
- Main event held at the Buckingham International, 1130 Nepean Highway, Highett. (Unfortunately, Council restrictions prevented the use of the VBA premises.)
- Swiss Pairs held at the VBA clubrooms (still a few vacancies available!)
- A strong cast of Australian and International players, with the semi-finals and finals broadcast on Bridge Base Online. Come and cheer on the Victorian team.
- Winners to be presented with the Pratt Family Medal – pictured above.

THE PARTNERSHIP BATTLEGROUND – 3 Bill Jacobs

AFFIRMATIONS 'R' US

You see it in every team sport on TV: teammates giving each other the high-fives.

Watch any doubles pair at the Australian Open Tennis. After each point, the two players touch hands and offer a word of encouragement. It doesn't matter whether they won or lost the point. In Olympic volleyball, everyone high-fives everyone else after every point. It's as annoying as hell to watch.

My son plays in his school first XVIII football team. The coaching staff hire a commercial company to come to matches and *count* each player's "affirmations" – words or actions of encouragement to a teammate. The day after the match, each player gets a personal report stating the number of affirmations made, and these are used as inputs into team selection, best-and-fairest voting and so on. I think that the school has too much money. The school's argument is that the team's performance is demonstrably improved when the affirmation count is high. (You have to wonder if there is a flaw in that logic somewhere.)

Perhaps the world's sports psychologists cannot all be wrong. Perhaps encouraging a teammate does tend to improve his performance.

In bridge, affirmation is rare. Criticism is more our game. The more stinging and sarcastic the better, to drive the point home. And one cannot help but think that if affirmations are proved to improve performance, then the opposite behaviour must degrade performance.

So here's a suggestion for you ... look for opportunities to congratulate your partner. A quiet "well done" or "good work" here or there. I'm not talking about giving your

partner an enthusiastic high-fives every time he takes 9 top tricks in 3NT. You need to be a bit selective. But bridge players do lots of good things ... stay in a part-score when game was not on, tap declarer out of trumps to defeat a contract, hold up a suit to make 3NT: telling partner that you noticed casts a warm glow, and will help the partnership flourish.

The VBA Library is disposing of duplicate copies of reference books. All are available for purchase for \$2.00. A list will be posted on the noticeboards in early March. Enquiries – Cathie Lachman – 9530 9006 or clachman@vba.asn.au

FOR STARTERS ... Bill Jacobs

This month we consider a simple auction:

Partner	You
1♣	1♥
3♥	?

Partner's 3♥ bid shows extra values – say about 16 to 18 points – and four card heart support. (His hand will also likely be shapely – do you see why?¹)

You have a strong hand, one worth considering a slam. This hand is why you have come to play bridge: bidding slams is fun, and making them is even better. For the last 10 years of his long life, the great American Oswald Jacoby used to bid lots of slams, and his explanation was always the same: "I had to bid slam – it might be the last chance I ever get."

Let's explore the tools available to help you to bid a good slam, and also to stay out of a bad one.

1. You hold:

♠ KQ42 ♥ KQJ654 ♦ 3 ♣ K9

What do you bid over 3♥?

¹ With a balanced hand, partner would probably have opened 1NT.

You probably know what to do here. Unless you are an extraordinarily unlucky player, the only tricks you are going to lose on this hand are aces. You need to find out how many partner has, and the way to do that is to bid 4NT, the Blackwood convention, asking partner to show the number of aces held.

With 4 aces (♠ Ax ♥ Axxx ♦ Ax ♣ Axxxx) then 7♥ is on. You have to have agreed with your partner how to show 4 aces – in classic Blackwood, a 5♣ response to 4NT shows 0 or 4 aces, and you will certainly know which of the two options he has!

If he has 3 aces (a 5♠ response to 4NT), the one ace you are missing is your only loser, and you can bid 6♥ with confidence.

If he has 2 aces (a 5♥ response to 4NT), then you can pass 5♥.

And if he shows 1 ace, you can go home right now, because it's just not your day. Given your hand, the chances that partner has only one ace is just about zero, but it is always wise, when considering embarking on Blackwood, to consider the possibility that you are off 3 aces.

The key thing to remember about Blackwood is that it is a tool for checking out how many *losers* you have, not how many *winners*. There's a difference. As a rule of thumb, before you bid Blackwood, ask yourself: "if I find out we are missing exactly one ace, how confident am I of making slam?" If the answer is "very confident", then go ahead with 4NT; but if the answer is that you really don't know, then you should look for another approach to the auction.

OK, next example hand:

2. You hold:

♠ A95 ♥ KJ10732 ♦ Q5 ♣ A2

What do you bid over 3♥?

Most bridge starters will wheel out 4NT with this hand as well. If partner responds 5♦ (one ace), they will scratch their head and either bid 6♥, hoping for the best, or 5♥ concerned that there is a second loser over

and above the missing ace. Either method could work out. Punting 6♥ will work well if partner has:

2a. ♠ Kx ♥ AQxx ♦ Kx ♣ KQxxx

Staying cautiously in 5♥ will work opposite:

2b. ♠ Kx ♥ AQxx ♦ Jx ♣ KQJxx

Blackwood is the wrong way to approach the hand, for several reasons. Firstly, it doesn't really help you diagnose whether you are off the ace-king of diamonds. And secondly, the fate of this hand probably depends on how good partner is for his 3♥ bid, and by bidding Blackwood now, you remove the opportunity for him to express an opinion.

The better way to approach this uncertain slam auction is to use cue-bidding. When you have unambiguously agreed a suit, hearts in this auction, there is little point in bidding another suit to suggest you end up in that suit – much more useful to use it as a “cue-bid”, indicating that you control the suit, typically with the ace.

With hand 2, you should cue-bid 3♠ over 3♥, showing the spade ace. If partner has the diamond ace, he will return the compliment by cue-bidding 4♦. Now you can bid 6♥ at least knowing that you will have good chances.

But suppose partner, lacking any ace to cue-bid, just returns to 4♥. Well, you can try again, cue-bidding 5♣. Now with hand 2a above, partner has the diamond control that you are seeking, and can bid 6♥. But with hand 2b, he can see plainly the hole in diamonds, because you have painted a fine picture, and he can sign-off again in 5♥.

A co-operative auction like this is a joy to behold – a real indication of a good partnership.

Now let's take a look at a couple of more unusual hands.

3. You hold:

♠ void ♥ 109762 ♦ AKJ105 ♣ AJ9

What do you bid over 3♥?

Blackwood is not going to help you here, and generally is a bad idea when you have a void. The problem is clear: if you are missing an ace, it won't matter if it is opposite your void, but how are you to find out?

You might think to cue bid 3♠ here, but it won't help much. Partner, lacking a minor suit ace, will sign off in 4♥. Now if you cue-bid again (say with 5♣), it still won't help, as partner will think you are worried about diamonds. Or if you cue-bid 5♦, partner will think you are worried about clubs!

What you really need to know about is partner's trumps. The best way to find out is to jump to 5♥ over 3♥. This says to your partner:

- I'm not interested in side suit controls
- I'm not interested in how many aces we have

There's only one interest left, which is partner's trumps. A jump to five of an agreed major generally asks partner to continue on to slam if his trumps are good.

One last one:

3. You hold:

♠ void ♥ Q9842 ♦ AKJ105 ♣ AQ9

What do you bid over 3♥?

It would be very un-Jacoby like to not play a slam here. Whatever partner holds, a small slam will have a chance. What about a grand slam? It's easy to construct hands for partner that make a grand slam lay-down: you don't need him to have much more than the ace-queen of hearts.

Josephine Culbertson (Ely's wife) solved this problem many years ago with a convention appropriately called “Josephine”. When trumps have been agreed, a bid of 5NT asks partner to bid 7 if he holds two of the top three trump honours.

It doesn't come up often, but when it comes to slams, it's best to be prepared.

Points to remember:

- Use Blackwood as a final check that you are not missing two aces.
- If knowing the number of aces missing doesn't tell you whether slam is good, then don't use Blackwood – consult partner instead.
- A jump to five of your agreed major asks partner to bid on with good trumps.



Vu-Graph quotes from Edgar Kaplan:
 “That’s the story of my life – all my life, I have been setting up non-working endplays”
 “Declarer could try a non-working squeeze”



THE TWELFTH TRICK

Dealer: S ♠ AQ32
 Vul: N/S ♥ 4
 ♦ K1053
 ♣ AJ94

 ♠ KJ4
 ♥ AJ3
 ♦ AQ9
 ♣ K832

Contract: 6♣ by South

The opening lead is ♥6, East playing ♥Q.

Plan the play. Solution on page 8.



SETTING TRICK - PROBLEMS

Problem 1:

Dealer: N ♠ J95
 Vul: E/W ♥ 96
 ♦ 983
 ♣ AK743

 ♠ AQ742
 ♥ 84
 ♦ AK106
 ♣ 62

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	4♥
D'ble	Pass	Pass	Pass

You rather nervously make an off-shape double of the opening 4♥¹. When you lead ♦K (or ♦A) dummy's tricks in clubs are a disappointment, but it looks as if your 3 tricks in defence are secure.

Partner follows ♦5, ♦4 (natural) or ♦4, ♦5 (reverse). Declarer's ♦Q falls when you cash a second diamond. How do you continue?

Problem 2:

Dealer: S ♠ QJ54
 Vul: E/W ♥ QJ
 ♦ 92
 ♣ Q10974

 ♠ A96
 ♥ K10984
 ♦ J5
 ♣ A65

West	North	East	South
			1♦
Pass	1♠	Pass	1NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Partner, on whom blessings, leads ♥6. Plan your defence.

Solutions on page 6.



Vu-Graph quotes from Edgar Kaplan:
 Well, he underled two aces on the last hand with ill effect, so this time he'll lead a club from ten-fourth. Twice burned, once shy."

¹ In fact, in a recent edition of the Western Australian newsletter, out of 10 panellists faced with this problem, 8 of them passed, 1 doubled and 1 bid 4♠

RECENT MASTER PROMOTIONS

Congratulations to the following members who have been recently promoted to a higher grade of Master:

Graduate Master	Leon Bergman Alexander Feigin Mark Grebler Danny Rabinowicz Francis Rose
Club Master	Phillippa Fitzpatrick Sena Hasthanayake
Local Master	Michael Glasman Annie Kiven Lyn Lutchner Kamara Nainanayake Elizabeth Williams
*Local Master	Stephen Rogers
**Local Master	Ellen Allery
*State Master	John Bristow
National Master	Nathan Luft

TALES OF 1NT Bill Jacobs

This is the story of two 1NT contracts. In each case, the dummy was remarkably similar – but the final outcomes were very different.

The first exhibit is from the National Open Teams in Canberra, reported by Lilli Allgood.

Dealer: S	♠ 975	
Vul: Both	♥ 876	
	♦ 10652	
	♣ 542	
♠ K2		♠ AQ84
♥ AJ10		♥ K954
♦ J94		♦ 83
♣ QJ1096		♣ AK8
	♠ J1063	
	♥ Q32	
	♦ AKQ7	
	♣ 73	

South opened 1NT, and rather surprisingly, everyone passed, North no doubt with relief.

Five rounds of clubs were fired off ... the discarding from dummy was easy enough,

but South's hand was under pressure. A fateful spade was let go. So the defence gathered four spade tricks and four heart tricks, for a defensive grand slam.

After the scoring changes in the eighties, the score of 700 became much less common, but it's not impossible, as this result proved.

Fast forward to night three of the Victorian Pennant:

Dealer: W	♠ 963	
Vul: N/S	♥ 832	
	♦ 943	
	♣ 10973	
♠ J1084		♠ A2
♥ K105		♥ J9764
♦ AK107		♦ Q92
♣ 84		♣ KJ6
	♠ KQ75	
	♥ AQ	
	♦ J65	
	♣ AQ52	

At my table (I will not admit to where I was sitting), the auction went:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♥	1NT
D'ble	Pass	Pass	Pass

South's 1NT overcall was very sound (perhaps double is a worthy alternative), but he was in deep trouble.

A heart was led to the jack and queen. Declarer knocked out the spade ace, won the heart return and played more spades. West cashed the top heart and fourth spade, and East had to make two discards.

He rather unwisely discarded a club and a diamond, and West, unwilling to lead from his diamonds switched to a club. This gave declarer four (!) club tricks and 7 in total for a most unlikely +180.

Whilst the defence made several blunders, the worst was the most subtle, at trick 1. When ♥5 was led, East knows that West has three hearts, and therefore declarer has one of AQ, AK or KQ doubleton. If he had just played a low heart to trick 1, then an entry to his hearts materialises, and the result will probably be an 1100 point penalty.

FOR MICHAELS-ISTS
Bill Jacobs

Last month, Ian published an article "For Cappelletti-ists": I was happy to agree to the article – Ian knows I hate Cappelletti, but I figured that any improvement offered could only help!

Recapping, the idea stated in that article is that if partner shows an unidentified 1-suiter (with a 2♣ overcall in Cappelletti), and the next hand bids a suit, then *Double* says "I have support for whatever your suit is – bid it". This is a useful concept, and it seems it can be extended to other situations where your partner has made a conventional bid which could show one of several suits.

Consider the Michaels cue-bid for example. Suppose your LHO opens 1♠, partner bids 2♠ showing hearts and a minor, and your RHO ups the ante to 3♠:

LHO	Part	RHO	You
1♠	2♠	3♠	?

If you hold:

♠ xxx ♥ Jx ♦ Axxx ♣ Kxxx

you would want to compete to four of partner's minor, as well as giving partner the option to progress further.

How about using a double to say "I have support for both your minors"? Without this convention, I suppose you would bid 4♣ meaning "pass or correct", but it seems wasteful to ignore the double. (With no discussion, a double of 3♠ would be penalties, but how likely is that to be useful? Not very!)

Using the double as takeout means that you can sensibly bid a one-suiter. For example, you can bid 4♣ over 3♠ with:

♠ xxx ♥ Jx ♦ Qx ♣ KQJ10xx

both to suggest clubs as a final contract, and as a lead-directing mechanism.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

SETTING TRICK – SOLUTIONS
Ian McCance

Problem 1:

Dealer: N	♠ J95	
Vul: E/W	♥ 96	
	♦ 983	
	♣ AK743	
♠ AQ742		♠ 1086
♥ 84		♥ A10
♦ AK106		♦ J754
♣ 62		♣ Q1085
	♠ K3	
	♥ KQJ7532	
	♦ Q2	
	♣ J9	

When ♦Q appears it is very likely that partner, rather than declarer, holds four. Do those clubs constitute a threat? If partner's only high card is ♠K, perhaps declarer could draw trumps and start on clubs?

The odds are that partner's low diamonds are telling you that the clubs are not a threat. If partner wanted spades he would have played the diamonds differently. Just continue diamonds – if they are 4-2 the other way round, that's OK, too. In due course you get 2 spade tricks for +300.

Problem 2:

Dealer: S	♠ QJ54	
Vul: E/W	♥ QJ	
	♦ 92	
	♣ Q10974	
♠ K1032		♠ A96
♥ 762		♥ K10984
♦ KQ103		♦ J5
♣ 83		♣ A65
	♠ 87	
	♥ A53	
	♦ A8764	
	♣ KJ2	

Partner, presumably with cards in diamonds and spades, has found a short-suit lead.

This is your chance to shine: duck ♥Q, encouraging if you play that way. This denies dummy's an entry in case clubs are declarer's source of tricks.

After you duck twice in clubs, aided by partner's length signal, partner will need to rise ♠K on a spade lead and continue hearts.

NEW FACES AND OLD

The VBA warmly welcomes the following new and re-activated members:

Anna Allwood	Tim Andrews
Barbara a'Beckett	Harry Bader
Jenny Atkinson	Richard Carter
Edward Beaumont	Richard Greenfield
Sue Dennett	Willie Jago
Graham Hill	Patricia Jones
Joan Kellaway	Yudice Meltzer
Dennis Meltzer	Robin Rawson
Phiul O'Flynn	Leon Rogers
Martha Rossiter	

RECENT RESULTS

Ramsden Swiss Pairs

- 1 S. Ozenir - T. Chira
- 2 M. Chrapot – M. Tencer
- 3 M. Shub – N. van der Hoek

Ailsa Tandy Eclectic Pairs

- 1 E. Hardy – R. Ellery
- 2 H. de Jong – G. Gaspar
- 3 R. Szabo-Bencze – S. Gerdan

The ABTA invites you to a

Seminar for Bridge Teachers
Saturday 17th June, 2006
To be held at the VBA Clubrooms
ABF Members may attend for free
Non ABF Members \$40
Lunch provided

Enquiries : Cathie Lachman 03-9530 9006
clachman@vba.asn.au

Information Sheets will be issued soon
Lorraine Harkness 02-4342 3638
lorraineharkness1@bigpond.com.au



MORE VARIATIONS ON A THEME

Last month we presented a defence problem that involved a very clever duck of an ace against slam. This prompted Michael Dilks to construct a similar problem:

Dealer: S ♠ A842
Vul: Both ♥ AQ8
♦ AQ1032
♣ K

♠ KQ10
♥ K765
♣ K4
♣ Q872

West	North	East	South
			1NT
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♥
Pass	6NT	All pass	

In 6NT, ♣J is led, and RHO, after a little thought ducks! (This was the defence suggested last month, and kills a black suit squeeze on West.)

You cash three spades, but LHO has J9xx, RHO pitches a club. Now you cash 4 hearts, the suit dividing: on the 13th heart, LHO pitches a diamond, and RHO another club. On ♦K, both opponents follow low. Now what? This is the position:

♠ -
♥ -
♦ AQ103
♣ -

♠ -
♥ -
♣ 4
♣ Q87

It appears that RHO started with:
♠ xx ♥ xxx ♦ Jxxx ♣ Axxx
in which case he has been strip-squeezed, and you can exit a club to his now bare ace, forcing him to lead into the ♦AQ10.

If RHO has totally fooled you, with:
♠ xx ♥ xxx ♦ Jxx ♣ Axxxx
then all you can do is look for an easier game.

THE TWELFTH TRICK
Bill Jacobs

Dealer: S ♠ AQ32
 Vul: N/S ♥ 4
 ♦ K1053
 ♣ AJ94

♠ 10865 ♠ 97
 ♥ K8765 ♥ Q1092
 ♦ J62 ♦ 874
 ♣ 5 ♣ Q1076

 ♠ KJ4
 ♥ AJ3
 ♦ AQ9
 ♣ K832

This is a Canberra hand – from the finals of the National Open Teams. Argentinian expert Pablo Lambardi declared 6♣ against David Smith and Tim Bourke.

Obviously, the key to the hand is to play the trumps for just one loser. In isolation, there is a cast-iron way to achieve this, assuming the trumps are not 5-0. You cash ♣A, and assuming everyone follows low, lead a club from dummy.

If East plays a low one, you put in the 8, picking up the suit for one loser if East started with Q10xx. If the 8 losers, then clubs are 3-2, and you have no further problems.

If East shows out, then you play ♣K, and lead back towards the ♣J9 to once again limit your trump losers to one.

It's a beautiful safety play, but alas, on this hand, it is not 100% foolproof. The problem is that you may need to ruff a heart in dummy. If you play ace and another, and West happens to have Q10xx, then when he wins the queen, he can play a heart, forcing dummy to ruff with the jack, and establishing the club 10 as the setting trick.

The best you can do, at trick 2, is play a club to the jack. If West has Q10xx, then all is well. If East has Q10xx, then he will win the queen, but after you have ruffed a heart in dummy and cashed the club ace, you will have a marked finesse for the contract.

If East wins the club jack with the *singleton* queen – unlucky!

NICE STOPPERS

It's amazing how weak your stopper can be when playing against thoughtful defenders.


 32
 KQ9 A7654
 J108

Against 3NT, West leads the king and queen, and declarer drops the 10 and jack! Now West plays the 9, and East, lacking a side entry and expecting his partner to have started with KQ98, ducks. Voila!

 54
 AKQ2 J10876
 93

West leads the king, and East drops the jack (to stop West underleading next, having started with AKxx). So West continues low (in case East started with J10x), and East plays the 8, to avoid blocking the suit if West started with KQ9x. South's 9 is a stopper!

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2006
Great Barrier Reef Congress



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