

Victorian Bridge Association Bulletin

June 2008

Editor: Bill Jacobs

TOO MUCH BRIDGE?

A letter to the editor canvasses an interesting topic:

The qualifying events for the Victorian ANC Teams have gotten out of hand. They take up an inordinate amount of time if you do well.

This year I qualified for the Open Butler Team and, as is usually the case, met a far superior Pennant Team in the Playoff against which we logically had a 25% chance to win and, surprising nobody, did not.

Then I entered the event for the Seniors Butler Team and my partner and I qualified for the ANC Seniors Team.

This is all very nice but, to achieve this, I had to play qualifying events over a 12 month period which required the following time commitment:

- 7 nights
- 6 weekends

Maybe you think I am being unreasonable but I find this requirement quite ridiculous. I hope the Match and Tournament Committee can take a hard look at this.

Blaine Howe

The multitude of bridge that Blaine refers to results from two principles:

For the last umpteen years, the Open team has been determined by a playoff between the team formed by a Butler pairs event and the winner of a major teams event, most recently the Victorian Open Teams Championship (the Pennant). The idea behind this is that all pairs should have an opportunity to compete for state representation – hence the pairs Butler event; but in theory Victoria is likely to do better at the ANC with a team that is

voluntarily formed and has won a major teams event – hence the Pennant.

Recent history supports this theory. In the last 10 years, the Pennant team has won the Victorian Playoff on 9 occasions, most playoffs being one-sided affairs, and has gone on to perform reasonably well in the ANC. Conversely, the years where Victoria selected its teams just via the Butler resulted in a long drought at the ANC.

The second principle is that players in “restricted” categories – Women, Seniors and Juniors – should all have the opportunity to compete also for Open representation. So rather than running side-by-side qualifiers, Victoria selects its Open team, then subsequently runs Butler-style events to form the other three teams.

The upshot of this is that Blaine could try for the Open team, and then subsequently qualify for the Seniors. Once again, this has translated to several good ANC results: in particular winning both the Seniors and Women’s ANCs in recent years.

So yes, there is a lot of bridge. But can there ever be too much?

Victor Champion Cup – Last Call!

Convention Centre, Southbank, Melbourne
5 JUNE – 9 JUNE 2008

Convenor: Jeannette Collins,
jcollins@tpg.com.au 0411 189 198
or entry forms from the VBA website

Thursday & Friday:

McCance Seniors Swiss Pairs
VCC Women’s Swiss Pairs
VCC Restricted Swiss Pairs (<300 MP)

Saturday, Sunday & Monday

Victor Champion Cup Swiss Teams
Restricted Swiss Teams (<300 MP)

FOR STARTERS
Bill Jacobs

With no-one vulnerable, your LHO deals and opens 2♥, a natural weak two: about 6-10 points and a 6-card suit.

Your partner doubles.

What does that mean?



You probably know what it means: it's just the same as if partner had doubled a 1♥ opening. It's a takeout double, suggesting an opening hand with a shortage in hearts.

The only reason I ask this question is that occasionally people will describe this double as an "optional double". When pressed, they have difficulty describing what that implies, but generally it includes the "opening hand short in hearts" bit, but also other more balanced shapes.

So I roll my eyes and sympathize with the partner who has to guess a response to one of these optional doubles.

Doubles of natural opening suit bids, from 1♣ to 4♠ should be fundamentally takeout doubles: suggesting shortage in the bid suit.

Here are two possible hands you might have after the auction:

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
2♥	D'ble	Pass	??
1) ♠ 985 ♥ AK543 ♦ J9 ♣ 1064			
2) ♠ 985 ♥ J10974 ♦ A3 ♣ K76			

What do you bid in each case?



Even over partner's takeout double, you have the option of leaving it in, and defending 2♥ doubled – perhaps that's where the term "optional double" comes from. With a 5 card heart suit, a penalty pass is certainly in the mix.

Decisions like this can be shrouded in mystery, but a question that is worth asking when considering going for a penalty is:

"Do I have a nasty surprise for declarer?"

On hand 1), the answer is Not Really. LHO knew he was missing ♥AK when he opened 2♥, and the three little hearts you hold aren't going to cause much stress. You might get a ruff with one of them, but otherwise, they are going to fall harmlessly under declarer's middle trumps.

So on hand 1), I would take out the takeout double to 2NT. (If you play the Lebensohl convention, where 2NT is an artificial bid showing a weak hand, the problem is much stickier!)

Hand 2) is a different kettle of fish. Your strong intermediate hearts form a very nasty surprise indeed for your LHO. He might have opened virtuously with ♥AKQxxx, thinking it was probably good for 6 tricks, only to find there are only 4 tricks in the suit.

So when considering going for penalties, it is always worthwhile looking at your spot cards in the trump suit: tens, nines and eights are so much more valuable than fours, threes and twos. The surprising fact is that J10974 in trumps is much more attractive for a penalty than AK543.

Let's say you pass 2♥ doubled with hand 2). Partner leads the spade king, and you see:

	♠ 76432
	♥ A
	♦ J965
	♣ Q54
♠ 985	
♥ J10974	
♦ A3	
♣ K76	

Declarer follows with ♠J, and then ruffs partner's ♠A continuation. Next he plays the diamond four, seven, nine ... and you win the ace.

What now?



Keep your fingers away from that third spade! It might be a safe return, but it allows declarer to win tricks with the small trumps that should be being lost to your middle trumps. You should return a trump and let declarer do his own work from there.

The full deal:

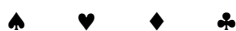
	♠ AKQ10		
	♥ 3		
	♦ Q1072		
	♣ AJ83		
♠ J		♠ 76432	
♥ KQ8652		♥ A	
♦ K84		♦ J965	
♣ 1092		♣ Q54	
	♠ 985		
	♥ J10974		
	♦ A3		
	♣ K76		

If you return a trump, declarer will be limited to taking 5 trump tricks and the diamond king. If you play a spade however, declarer will be able to win all 6 of his trumps, rendering your nasty surprise impotent.

Points to remember:

- When deciding whether to play for penalties, consider not only the length of your trumps, but also the strength of your spot cards.
- Be wary of giving declarer free tricks with low trumps!

It was difficult for your partner, but his continuing with a second high spade at trick two was a mistake. A trump switch would have limited declarer to 4 trump tricks and defeated the contract by three tricks. Instead he gave declarer a freebie spade ruff.



Vu-Graph quotes from Edgar Kaplan:

“To open 1NT with a 5-card major is not a misdemeanour but a felony.”

“East’s 3♥ bid on Qxxx showed great fortitude. Personally, I’d rather have fiveitude.”

SETTING TRICK - PROBLEMS

Problem 1:

Dealer: W	♠ 7		
Vul: Nil	♥ 752		
	♦ AKQ985		
	♣ AJ3		
		♠ 63	
		♥ 4	
		♦ J7632	
		♣ 87542	
West	North	East	South
1♥	2♦	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Playing a Seniors’ selection to qualify teams for a significant international event, you pick up a load of minor-suited junk. Partner starts hearts, ♥A, ♥K (you discouraged clubs with your discard), ♥Q ...

Can you see any chance for the defence?

Problem 2:

Dealer: N	♠ Q83		
Vul: Both	♥ A1084		
	♦ J8		
	♣ J1052		
		♠ J4	
		♥ J632	
		♦ K62	
		♣ K764	
West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♦
Pass	1♥	Pass	2NT*
Pass	3NT	All pass	

* 18-19 HCP

Partner leads ♠7 to your ♠J and declarer’s ♠A. Declarer continues with ♣8, partner’s ♣3 and dummy’s ♣2.

Do you win this trick? To continue with which card?

Solutions on page 7.



WHO WAS THAT MASKED MAN? Blaine Howe

Episode 2 – Full Disclosure

The bidding is over and you have just become dummy. Confirm who is on lead if you believe this will help. Be polite about it and do not be patronising – it is so easy to do this I thought I should mention it.

Before the opening lead is made, point out anything significant about declarer's bidding that may not have been disclosed yet. I believe very strongly in this and urge all players to volunteer information the opponents are entitled to.

For instance, my partner has responded 1NT to my 1♥ opening and is playing there. Our response of 1NT shows 6-11 HCP and is non-forcing. I should tell them this.

Do not volunteer information about your own hand when they do not ask unless the information is exact, such as a given sequence guaranteeing 5-5 in 2 suits when the opponents might have expected 5-4. If I volunteer my own 1NT bid shows 6-11 HCP when they expected 6-9 HCP, they might reasonably get a little peeved when I table 7 HCP.

Providing information to the opponents about agreements you have is an important part of being an ethical player. What you should and should not do can be complicated and everyone should make an effort to talk to senior players and directors about this.

It takes many questions before you can be comfortable with what you should tell the opponents and what becomes too much information and serves only to confuse them.

Ethics in bridge like ethics in life is frequently not straightforward.

Also, as you move up the bridge food chain, the expectation of your knowledge about ethics goes up. Anyone who plays in congress events or higher should make the effort to learn about disclosure and how to fill out a system card properly.

THE TWELFTH TRICK

Dealer: S ♠ KQ104
 Vul: All ♥ A10532
 ♦ 65
 ♣ K2

♠ 863
 ♥ KJ874
 ♦ A
 ♣ AJ73

West	North	East	South
			1♥
Pass	2♣*	3♦	4♦
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♣
Pass	6♥	All pass	

* artificial

This deal is from the Polish Open trials for the European Championships. See if you can do better than the Polish declarer, who failed in 6♥.

The diamond two is led to the queen and ace. You correctly play the heart king (LHO being more likely to have the three outstanding hearts), and all follow low. Take it from there.

Solution on Page 7.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

Quick 3NT

♠ J942
 ♥ AQJ
 ♦ 63
 ♣ J543

♠ AQ3
 ♥ 962
 ♦ AJ7
 ♣ AKQ6

West	North	East	South
			2NT
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♦
Pass	3NT	All pass	

Playing IMPs, you have a simple auction to 3NT. The lead is the heart four (fourth-best leads).

Plan the play – solution on page 6.

Deni Duo Tops Pairs

Dinny Downie and Trish Young from Deniliquin led the field all day to win the recent Northern Region Pairs championship. They are members of the Echuca club and have been strong supporters of the region in recent years. They have both been playing for more than 20 years, and although Trish has won some other regional events, this was the first major win for Dinny. They were thrilled with their result, and by the time this is published they will have completed playing in the Womens Selection Stage 2.



Dinny Downie and Trish Young

Annual Bemm River Bridge Conference!

For the second year in a row, members of the Lakes Entrance Bridge Club organised a trip to Bemm River. The aim of the trip was good fun, varied bridge experiences, great food and the relaxing of barriers.

We had members from Paynesville, Bairnsdale and Sale who joined our Lakes Entrance clan to have a fabulous time at The Bemm.

Our Monarch of 2007, Myrtle Hodgson, continued in her role in her usual dignified, if slightly bemused manner. This year we elected a Duchess, Kaye Bignall, to aid the Queen in her many royal duties. These duties include such activities as dubbing winners (with a fly swat), presiding over the many feasts and regaling us with her royal address.

Our gathering included well "pointed" members (including four directors), very new

players who are just starting this journey through the fascinating and frustrating world of Bridge and many players who are somewhere along the path! Special thanks to Shirley Watson who at very short notice organised our play and calculated the order of achievement.

There was much hilarity as well-seasoned players let their hair down and fought for the very rare and much prized Bemm Points. New players were teamed with fonts of wisdom and gained enormous help in their quest to master this complicated game. It was noted that the evening sessions (following the evening meal and drinks) were very noisy – if not raucous!

During the day we were lucky enough to have some lessons from some excellent players (Ilma Clark, Claire Lee, Frank Power, Lorraine Robinson), who were happy to share their secrets with us – we look forward to putting them into practice at the bridge table.

Heartfelt thanks were extended to Anne Den Houting who has taught many of the members at Lakes Entrance and has an incredible retention rate.

The 37 people who attended the annual Bemm River Bridge Conference enjoyed the fabulous food (spit roasts of venison, pork and beef – BBQ's, yummy ice creams, slices and soup), the company (often the first chance to really get to know the people we regularly pit our wits against) and the Bridge (with a variety of players and many systems).

Thank you to the organisers – especially Terry Nadebaum – for yet another wonderful Bemm River experience.

Julie Farmer

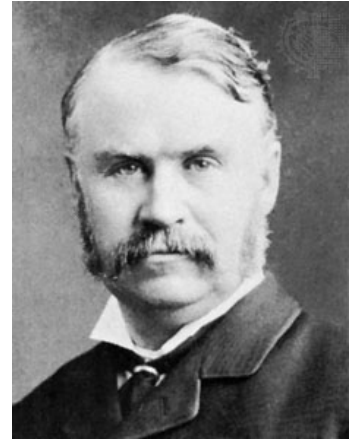


Conference Delegates

THE MODERN BRIDGE COMPETITOR

If W.S. Gilbert had played bridge ...
<http://www.naic.edu/~gibson/poems/gilbert1.html>

I am the very model of a modern bridge competitor,
 I write many pages as a club newsletter editor.
 I know the Laws of Contract, and I quote debates historical,
 From revoking to etiquette, in order categorical.
 I'm very well acquainted too, with card play mathematical,
 I understand all squeezes, both simple and quadratical.
 As committee President, I'm teeming with advocacy,
 With many cheerful rulings tinged with my hypocrisy.
 In short, as bridge player, President and editor,
 I am the very model of a modern bridge competitor.



I have to stay back after class ...

The following setup was the subject of last month's "For Starters":

Dealer: E	♠ 43	
Vul: N/S	♥ Q876	
	♦ K942	
	♣ 764	
♠ 107		♠ KQJ986
♥ J10532		♥ 9
♦ Q5		♦ J108
♣ Q1082		♣ J53
	♠ A52	
	♥ AK4	
	♦ A763	
	♣ AK9	

South declared 3NT on a spade lead after a 3♠ opening from East. My educational theme was that South should manage the diamond suit to ensure that East doesn't get on lead. So after winning the third spade and testing hearts, play a diamond to the king (or duck if West plays the queen), then a diamond ducked to West's queen.

Steve Grant from New York pounced on this ... he's sitting West and discards that diamond queen on the third round of spades!

Now I have to write out 100 times "I must properly proof my play problems."

Of course, few real Wests would find such a brilliancy, but nevertheless, it was absolutely pointless for declarer to duck the *second* spade.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

Quick 3NT

	♠ J942	
	♥ AQJ	
	♦ 63	
	♣ J543	
♠ K105		♠ 876
♥ 108743		♥ K5
♦ Q542		♦ K1098
♣ 9		♣ 10872
	♠ AQ3	
	♥ 962	
	♦ AJ7	
	♣ AKQ6	

Not too quick I hope. If you quickly finesse the heart at trick 1, you quickly go down. East wins the heart king and switches to a diamond.

If instead you slowly win the heart ace at trick 1 and take the spade finesse, then you've given yourself all your chances in 3NT.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

SETTING TRICK – SOLUTIONS
Ian McCance

Problem 1:

Dealer: W	♠ 7
Vul: Nil	♥ 752
	♦ AKQ985
	♣ AJ3
♠ 10984	♠ 63
♥ AKQJ10	♥ 4
♦ -	♦ J7632
♣ KQ96	♣ 87542
	♠ AKQJ52
	♥ 9863
	♦ 104
	♣ 10

Partner is merrily shoving out top hearts. If he started with only five, perhaps he intends to play a fourth round so you can overtrump dummy. You know you can't, and now that we can see partner's spades, it seems he was having a Senior moment in thinking so.

Dummy is loaded, and the only way to go is to trump ♥Q and return a diamond. A long Senior moment – partner should have played ♥J, not ♥Q, to ensure a diamond return and the setting trick.

Problem 2:

Dealer: N	♠ Q83
Vul: Both	♥ A1084
	♦ J8
	♣ J1052
♠ 9752	♠ J4
♥ 975	♥ J632
♦ Q1095	♦ K62
♣ A3	♣ K764
	♠ AK106
	♥ KQ
	♦ A743
	♣ Q98

The ♠7 cannot be fourth best – partner's spades must be rubbish. And it seems declarer is developing clubs for his contract.

So we should win ♣K and switch. To what? Hearts are hopeless with those strong spots in dummy. And spades are equally hopeless: even if partner has 5 of them, he has neither the entries nor time to set them up.

A diamond is the solution.

THE TWELFTH TRICK
Bill Jacobs

Dealer: S	♠ KQ104
Vul: All	♥ A10532
	♦ 65
	♣ K2
♠ 9752	♠ AJ
♥ Q6	♥ 9
♦ J92	♦ KQ108743
♣ Q984	♣ 1065
	♠ 863
	♥ KJ874
	♦ A
	♣ AJ73

All things being equal, I would recommend finessing West for the spade jack. East is likely to have ♠A for his vulnerable 3♦ bid. So even if a spade to the king is ducked, play a spade to the *ten* next.

But like any good recipe, it's all in the preparation. The one setup which can create a variation to this plan is where East has ♠AJ doubleton, in which case a spade to the king endplays him if the hand has been stripped ... sorry, eliminated¹.

The elimination is trickier than it looks. After drawing the second trump with the ace, the Polish declarer took what seemed an obvious play – he ruffed dummy's diamond. Now he realised his error – if he then plays 3 rounds of clubs, ruffing, he is in dummy at the wrong time needing to either play spades from dummy or shorten his trumps with a trump play.

So he played a spade to the king immediately: East won, exited with a club, and declarer subsequently took a losing spade finesse. That was not the right way to get to Pau, the venue for the European Championships.

The winning order of plays is second trump, three rounds of clubs ruffing in dummy, *then* the diamond ruffed to hand, for a spade play to the king. East has been disrobed of his exit cards.



¹ See last month's bulletin: "Manoeuvre is not indelicate"

IN DEFENCE OF THE DONKEY David Smith

In last month's bulletin, editor Bill Jacobs takes a broad swipe at the so-called Donkey Twos in vogue at the moment. Bill goes on to suggest defensive principles for combating all forms of "nutty" (just a bit judgemental here, Bill) two openings. These principles are indeed excellent and I commend the article for this. Nevertheless, as Bill is an old friend and sparring partner of mine, and I play these bids, I feel it appropriate to write a few words in support of the method.

The idea is that openings of 2♦, 2♥ and 2♠ show two specific suits, one of which is always spades (the other diamonds, heart and clubs respectively), in a hand too weak for a normal opening. Bill notes that people "like them not because they are sound (they aren't), but because opponents often do not cope."

Well, yes, the idea of all pre-emption is to force opponents to guess where they otherwise might have an easy run. Interestingly the above criticism was levelled against Weak Two bids in the 1950s in the USA, as was the suggestion that it was their unfamiliarity that led to undeserved good results.

From a personal viewpoint, I can tell you exactly why I have been playing the Donkeys. Arjuna Delivera was talked into them by his son Michael (a youth player) a few years ago and enjoyed them so much that he introduced them to Charlie Snashall and me. So there it is. We are big kids. Guilty as charged. We play them because they are fun. They let you bid on bad hands. Bad hands are more frequent than good hands. Passing all the time is boring.

But can Donkey Twos be sound, when they may contain only 4-4 shapes? No, they pose an inherent risk to the opener. They can be made far closer to sound by declining to open 4-4 shapes when vulnerable, checking for suit quality and so on. This is really exactly the same with a traditional weak two bid; their soundness deteriorates with the introduction of poor suit quality, 5 card suits, and inattention to defects such as voids or side 4-card majors.

What the Donkey Twos hope to achieve is pre-emption with a fit. They have this in common with many approaches: overcall methods devised against strong 1♣ openings; weak limited opening systems that allow 4 card major openings with 8-12 points; systems that have a bid to show both majors in a relatively weak hand; and similar aggressive methods. The big payoff comes when the partnership can force the auction to the three-level or more with a known fit and relatively few high-card points. As against this, there is much downside when the opening side has no good fit, or is already too high when they find a fit.

I don't necessarily recommend Donkey Twos as something you should have in your system armoury – but I do recommend you remember that Bridge is a game, *and having fun is part of the game.*



RECENT RESULTS

Fred Altman Swiss Pairs

- 1 M. Dilks – J. Stark
- 2 S. Klofa – C. Schwabegger
- 3 C. Hughes – T. Chira

VBA Open Pairs

Championship

- 1 S. Arber – H. de Jong
- 2 D. Davis – L. Gold
- 3 R. Gallus – S. Henbest

Plate

- 1 L. Fine – J. Fine
- 2 C. Macquarrie – D. Sharman
- 3 J. Savage – E. Windmiller

Victorian Women's Team Selection

- 1 Rena Kaplan – Paula Schroor
- 2 Tammy Bloom – Janina Fleiszig
- 3 Eva Caplan – Jenny Thompson

Victorian Seniors Team Selection

- 1 Sam Arber – Henri de Jong
- 2 George Gaspar – Boris Tencer
- 3 Michael Dilks – Blaine Howe

Congratulations to these women and seniors, who form Victorian teams for the upcoming ANC at the Gold Coast.