

Victorian Bridge Association Bulletin

October 2008

Editor: Bill Jacobs

RIP – STOP CARD

After a three-month trial, the skip bid warnings introduced into the VBA Regulations have been reviewed and canned by the Match and Tournament Committee.

The use of the Stop card is now no longer authorised for use in Victorian Club and State events.

It will not be missed.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

TWO PROBLEMS

1) ♠ Q63
Dealer: W ♥ KQJ42
Vul: All ♦ 75
♣ 1076

♠ AJ
♥ 103
♦ A109843
♣ AK7

West	North	East	You
Pass	Pass	1♠	1NT
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

Against 3NT, the ♠5 is led, low, nine Plan the play.

2) All vulnerable, you hold:

♠ J7 ♥ KQ42 ♦ AK95 ♣ 864

You deal, and the auction is:

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
			1♦
Pass	2♣	2♠	3♣
3♠	D'ble	All Pass	

What do you lead to 3♠ doubled?

More on these hands later.

WHO WAS THAT MASKED MAN? Blaine Howe

Episode 6 – Claims

This must be a tricky beast because many players manage claims badly¹.

When declarer makes a claim say nothing and do not touch your cards until declarer and the defence agree.

Read that sentence again. If you always do this, you are in a very small minority of players.

Unless the director or another player specifically asks you a question, it is not your party. If you are asked a question, answer the exact question and no more – then return to silent running.

It should be easy to do nothing but it doesn't seem to happen. When a claim is disputed in any way, good manners and commonsense frequently leave the table together and don't come back for a while.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

VBA Grand National Restricted Pairs Heat Tuesday Evenings 28th Oct and 11th, 18th Nov

The VBA invites all Victorian Players under Life Master status to participate in the GNRP (for Gold points).

All qualifying pairs from this heat will be eligible to compete in the GNRP Regional Final to be held at the VBA on Sunday 23rd November, 2008.

Eight pairs will ultimately qualify for the National Final to be held during the Summer Festival of Bridge in Canberra in January 2009

Total Cost for VBA Heat participation (3 weeks): \$45 per player
Subsequent Cost for Regional Final participation (1 day): \$25 per player

Enter: via the website: www.vba.asn.au or phone 9530 9006

¹ Indeed they do! See article on Claims in this bulletin

FOR STARTERS
Bill Jacobs

The Point Of It All

If you were asked to pick the greatest invention in mankind's history, it would probably be the wheel. The wheel is simple, and it's effective. It's unlikely that any other invention comes close to it.

What about the greatest *bridge* invention ever? I would say that it would be the high-card point: ace = 4, king = 3, queen = 2, jack = 1, used to evaluate the strength of a hand. The inventor was Milton Work (1864-1934), pictured right.



Like the wheel, it's simple and effective. Simple in that it takes just a second or two to use (well, a 25 point monster might need a couple of recounts), and it has proved over the years to be very, very effective.

There have been various adjustments suggested to hone the point count: in particular adding points for distribution (void = 3, singleton = 2, doubleton = 1), but I suggest you don't use these adjustments in an arithmetic way, as they complicate the process and don't always apply well. Obviously, for example, distribution points have little value when working out how high to go in notrumps.

Whilst points give an excellent initial estimate of a hand's worth, they don't tell the full story. There are other factors to consider in estimating a hand's strength.

In a seminal article in the *Bridge World* in the 1980's, editor Edgar Kaplan attempted to quantify all the subtle adjustments he used to give a more accurate point-count value for any hand. He explained his evaluation techniques to co-editor Jeff Rubens, who then wrote some software to make the advanced calculation.

This software lives on at one of the most interesting web-sites in all of bridgedom. It is <http://www.gg.caltech.edu/~jeff/KNR.cgi>

and at that site, you can type in a hand, and be told how many points Kaplan thinks it is really worth.

Let's use it to help us in the following quiz.

A) ♠ 43 ♥ AKQ4 ♦ AQJ ♣ 5432

B) ♠ KJ ♥ KQJ4 ♦ QJ3 ♣ K432

A pair of 16-counts. Which hand is stronger?

One of the slight flaws of point count is that aces are slightly undervalued at 4 points. Aces have special properties not enjoyed by other cards.

With an ace, you are better able to control when to win a trick. This is the basis of the simple hold-up play in notrumps, where you win the ace as late as possible to run one of the defenders out of that suit.

Conversely, aces are fast winners – they can win the first trick in a suit. This can be useful in many ways.

So I'd prefer to have hand A). It has the better trick-taking potential. Kaplan rates A) as worth 16.2 points; B) is 14.05 points.

As a point of calibration, Kaplan thinks
♠ Axxx ♥ xxx ♦ xxx ♣ xxx
is 4.1 points. Conversely, he sneers at
♠ Jxxx ♥ Jxx ♦ Jxx ♣ Jxx
as worth only 0.8 points!

C) ♠ AK873 ♥ AQ53 ♦ 54 ♣ 73

D) ♠ 87543 ♥ 6543 ♦ AK ♣ AQ

Two 13-counts this time. Which is stronger?

Hand C) is much stronger than D). High card points in the long suits make it easier to develop tricks in that suit. High card points in the short suits take tricks, but don't do anything to help develop low cards into tricks.

C) is worth 15.9 Kaplan points, D) only 12.

Bartender, set 'em up again.

E) ♠ K43 ♥ A632 ♦ A1042 ♣ Q3

F) ♠ 643 ♥ AK54 ♦ AQ102 ♣ 43

Which is stronger?

This is more subtle. High cards work better when together in a suit. Take the majors: hand F) has two clear tricks: the ace and king of hearts. But in hand E), you cannot be certain that the spade king will take a trick: for example, left hand opponent might have the ace-queen.

Similarly, the queen has a better chance of proving useful when in the company of the diamond ace and ten, than as an orphan in clubs.

Hand F) is stronger than E), 14.85 to 12.95 according to Kaplan.

One more round:

G) ♠ A10985 ♥ K1094 ♦ A2 ♣ 76

H) ♠ A6532 ♥ K542 ♦ A2 ♣ Q5

Hand H) has two more points this time, but which hand do you prefer?

The point count pays no attention to good spot cards: tens, nines and eights. But clearly spots are worth something. Do the fine spot cards in the majors in hand G) compensate for the club queen in hand H)?

Kaplan has no doubt on the matter: he rates G) as 14.4 points, H) is 13.65 points. Surprising? Certainly, but worth reflecting upon.

These strength comparisons are interesting, but I am not suggesting that you radically alter your bidding based on such factors.

For example, I am happy to open a strong 1NT on B). And D) must be opened with 1♠, unpleasant though that is. The idea is not to distort your bidding, but hone it.

"Points" to remember:

- Aces are a bit better than 4 points
- Points are more useful in long suits than in short suits
- High cards have a combining value when together in suits
- Don't forget to give credit to tens, nines and eights. They are not pointless!

Now that we have accurately estimated the strength of these hands, next month we will revisit the eight hands and give you some bidding decisions to make.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

THE TWELFTH TRICK

IMPs ♠ K7642
 Dealer: S ♥ AKQ8743
 Vul: nil ♦ Q
 ♣ -
 ♠ Q1093
 ♥ 52
 ♦ A54
 ♣ AQ87

West	North	East	South
			1♣
Pass	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♣
Pass	4♥	Pass	5♦
Pass	6♠	All Pass	

West leads the diamond 6, queen, 2 ...

Take it from there. Solution on page 8.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

Bridge for Breast Cancer

The Rotary Club of Prahran will host a bridge evening to raise funds for breast cancer and the Alfred Hospital on Tuesday October 14 at St John's Church Hall Cnr Toorak and Clendon Roads Toorak, with Rena Kaplan. We hope to make this a weekly game, with all money being donated to the charities above. A \$10.00 donation includes supper.

Play commences 7.30pm sharp!

BORN WITH THESE CARDS TO PLAY

If Bruce Springsteen had played bridge ...
<http://www.brucespringsteen.net/songs/BornInTheUSA.html>



Born with these cards to play,
 I was – born, with these cards to play
 Born, with these cards to play –
 I'm just a tired civil servant with some cards to play

Came back home to the VBA,
 Found a willing partner who was ready to play,
 Liked the hand I saw, so I bid it a lot,
 Lefty hammered me, I was gettin' shot.

Tried spades, but I'm goin' down,
 The first trick they took me underground
 Feeling like a fool 'cause I bid too much
 Spent half the game tryin' to cover it up ...

SETTING TRICK - PROBLEMS

Problem 1:

Dealer: W ♠ J9
 Vul: nil ♥ QJ65
 ♦ Q93
 ♣ AKJ2

 ♠ AK2
 ♥ 874
 ♦ J1065
 ♣ 1084

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦*	Pass	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

* an opening bid with hearts

Partner leads ♠4 and you win with ♠K and cash ♠A. Declarer follows ♠6 then ♠5 and partner's second spade is ♠10. What do you play next?

Problem 2:

Dealer: N ♠ J975
 Vul: N/S ♥ KQJ8
 ♦ K6
 ♣ Q106

 ♠ 86
 ♥ A96
 ♦ AQ875
 ♣ J83

West	North	East	South
	1NT	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Partner leads ♥4, dummy plays low, and you win with ♥A (♥5 from declarer). That ♥4 could hardly be a singleton and it looks as if the defence will have to take 4 tricks quickly. If you can get partner to lead a diamond that will be 3, you need another, that will be partner's entry. So what card do you return?

Solutions on Page 8.

**WEDNESDAY MORNING
 DUPLICATE SESSION**
 at the VBA
 131 Poath Road, Murrumbidgee

Commencing? Wednesdays 15th October, 2008 at 11.15 a.m.
 finished by 2.45 p.m. - 20 minute lunch break

Cost? \$7 all players

Predeal boards with hand records

The Bridge Players Café will be open for lunch, coffee, cakes etc

RECENT MASTER PROMOTIONS

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

Graduate Master	Peter Buchan Tony Warnock
Club Master	Belinda Briggs
Local Master	Bianca Gold Rosemary O'Connor
**Local Master	Ray Gilmour

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

DOUBLE DUMMY SOLVERS
Bill Jacobs

Computers have been responsible for much innovation in bridge over the decades, and not least of these is the development of the double dummy solver. For years now, hand records have included a statement of who can make what, courtesy of software like Deep Finesse.

Occasionally, Deep Finesse gives insight into some beautiful aspects of the game. For example, hand 1) (from page 1) occurred in the Rothfield Teams held in July:

IMPs	♠ Q63
Dealer: W	♥ KQJ42
Vul: All	♦ 75
	♣ 1076
♠ 875	♠ K10942
♥ 96	♥ A875
♦ J62	♦ KQ
♣ Q9853	♣ J2
	♠ AJ
	♥ 103
	♦ A109843
	♣ AK4

Like much of the field, I played 3NT, and the lead was a spade, low, nine, jack.

The contract seemed hopeless: East could duck one round of hearts, win the next trick and knock out my bare spade ace. I would have to play accurately to get out for one off.

Indeed the contract *was* hopeless at the end of trick 1, and no doubt I wasn't the only one surprised when Deep Finesse told us that 3NT was cold.

3NT can be made by winning the first trick with the spade ace! Then when East is forced to win the heart ace, he finds that he cannot continue with the spades without letting dummy in to run the hearts. He has to let declarer establish and run the diamonds.

The technically correct play is to win trick one with the spade ace, cash the diamond ace, and club ace-king, then play on hearts. Essentially this plays for East to be sufficiently short in the minors, or not find an unblock of honours, so that he is forced to give dummy the lead and the contract.

On to hand 2). What did you lead to 3♠ doubled with:

♠ J7 ♥ KQ42 ♦ AK95 ♣ 864

This interesting lead problem was posed in 1988 in the Bridge World Master Solvers Club. The majority led a top diamond, with significant minorities leading spades and clubs. Panelist Ron Gerard was on his own with the heart king lead. His comments:

"I expect something like:

	♠ A62
	♥ AJ8
	♦ 72
	♣ QJ953
♠ 1095	♠ KQ843
♥ 10763	♥ 95
♦ 64	♦ QJ1083
♣ AK102	♣ 7
	♠ J7
	♥ KQ42
	♦ AK95
	♣ 864

On any lead except a heart, declarer can get out for down one."

The moderator didn't think much of the lead, but accepted the double-dummy analysis. It does seem that if you don't grab your two heart tricks, declarer will pitch a heart loser on a second top club.

In 2008, Gerard might have run his proposed hand through a double dummy solver, which would have told him that he was wrong: any lead except a diamond will beat the contract two tricks.

The reason is that if declarer takes heart pitches, the defence can continue on with clubs and hearts, and declarer eventually loses control of the hand.

So double dummy solvers are a great tool for journalists and authors, but they are also a fine learning aide. On hand 1) they point us to a sensational play that perhaps can be found if you think of it (or have seen it before). And hand 2) contains a little lesson as well: that against moderate trump fits (clearly an 8 card fit on the auction), a forcing defence can pay unexpected dividends.

ETHICAL DILEMMAS - IX
Bill Jacobs

Claims

Claim and concession: An agreement between one who cannot play and two who cannot defend.

I have been editing the VBA Bulletin (initially with Ian McCance) for over five years now. The very first of these bulletins, in May 2003, contained the following advice from Ian:

A final "*please remember*" refers to another source of acrimony, and that is claims. To my mind these should be absolutely clear-cut: "my hand is high", "dummy is high", "cross-trumping". Almost anything else can cause disputation, especially if there are trumps outstanding.

Claims are an essential part of bridge. Without the ability to claim, the pastime would become tedious, with the cards forced to be played out to trick 13.

So all players should go ahead and make claims as declarer when appropriate. (And dummies should read Blaine's article on page 1 to check out their role.) But heed Ian's advice: only make a claim in obvious and simple situations.

Defensive claims should be rare. They should never be made when the partner of claimer needs to do something sensible. Personally, I suggest you limit defensive claims to situations roughly equivalent of:

At trick 12, declarer leads up to dummy's KJ, and starts thinking which card to put in. Sitting over dummy with AQ, it's fair (and humane!) to face your cards.

OK, so much for the easy stuff. The problems start arising when someone makes an incomplete or incorrect claim. The first thing to realise is that when a claim is made, *play ceases*. You cannot continue playing, with think time, after a claim. If you are not happy with the claim you should simply call the director.

The ins-and-outs of bad claims have no limits. The Laws recognize this, and provide directors with some general guidance on how to resolve incomplete, doubtful or incorrect claims.

Here are a couple of examples from a recent event at the VBA:

	♠ 832	
	♥ K94	
	♦ AQ92	
	♣ 532	
♠ A		♠ J10976
♥ 873		♥ J106
♦ J1063		♦ K854
♣ KQJ109		♣ 8
	♠ KQ54	
	♥ AQ52	
	♦ 7	
	♣ A764	

South declared 2♣ on the club king lead. Declarer ducked and won the second club with the ace.

South played a diamond to the ace, ruffed a diamond (East, a strong player, playing low on the second diamond), heart to the king, another diamond ruff, and two more winning hearts. The thirteenth heart was played in this position, declarer having won 7 tricks:

	♠ 832	
	♥ -	
	♦ Q	
	♣ 5	
♠ A		♠ J1097
♥ -		♥ -
♦ J		♦ K
♣ J109		♣ -
	♠ KQ54	
	♥ 5	
	♦ -	
	♣ -	

West claimed the remainder, putting the club nine on the long heart, and immediately laying the remaining cards down on the table one after the other, ♣J, ♣10, ♠A, ♦J.

The problem with this claim was that it made it easy for East to hold on to the ♦K to win trick 13. Not that the winning discarding was difficult: as long as East had counted the diamonds correctly he would know to keep

the king. However the claim did remove any possibility of East making a mistake.

How would you rule as the director?

Second claim:

	♠ K98643	
	♥ 92	
	♦ A	
	♣ K964	
♠ J102		♠ A7
♥ A74		♥ K8
♦ QJ6542		♦ 10973
♣ 3		♣ AJ852
	♠ Q5	
	♥ QJ10653	
	♦ K8	
	♣ Q107	

South declared 2♥. The lead was the club 3 – low, jack, low(!). East switched to a low heart to the ace, a heart was played back to the king, and a diamond was won by the ace.

Declarer played a spade to the queen, winning, drew the last trump, and in the following position (having lost three tricks):

	♠ K986	
	♥ -	
	♦ -	
	♣ K96	
♠ J10		♠ A
♥ -		♥ -
♦ QJ654		♦ 109
♣ -		♣ A852
	♠ 5	
	♥ J106	
	♦ K	
	♣ Q10	

he claimed! Specifically, he put his cards face up on the table, and said "I take all my high tricks and give you a spade at the end – making 9 tricks". The director was called.

Clearly declarer had a slip-of-the-mind at trick 1, thinking that East had won the club ace - this explains his playing low on the jack.

Well obviously he has to lose a trick to the club ace, but if he had actually played his cards in the order of all the trumps, and the diamond king, before "attempting" to cash his clubs, then after East wins the club ace,

the defence would have a good diamond to cash – and that would be down one.

How would you rule as the director?

Before we look at the actual rulings, what do you think of the decisions of the "innocent" side to contest both these claims?

Were they ethical? Certainly. Neither claim was solid, and the opponents were clearly within their rights to get a ruling.

Were they sporting? That could be debated. In my view it was entirely sporting to call the director. In each case, an opponent had made an error, and it was reasonable that they may have to pay for that error.

Interesting is the philosophy of the German star, and maybe best female player in the world, Sabine Auken. Her approach is simple: she ALWAYS calls the director and gets a ruling. Her view is that she doesn't want to worry about making a decision like: "how important is this match?" or "how much do I like my opponent?" She just calls the director, and lets the laws get applied.

The Rulings

The Laws give the following generic guidance on ruling on claims:

In ruling on a contested claim, the Director adjudicates the result of the board as equitably as possible to both sides, but any doubtful points shall be resolved against the claimer.

Does that change your thoughts?

On the first hand, the defensive claim was allowed - 2♣ was one off. The director felt that the likelihood that East would miscount the hand was close to zero.

On the second hand, 2♥ was ruled one off. The director decided that declarer had no reason not to play his supposed winners in a random order, and therefore there was a fair chance that he would choose the losing order.

Both those rulings looked A-OK to me!

THE TWELFTH TRICK Bill Jacobs

IMPs	♠ K7642
Dealer: S	♥ AKQ8743
Vul: nil	♦ Q
	♣ -
♠ -	♠ AJ85
♥ J96	♥ 10
♦ KJ76	♦ 109832
♣ K106543	♣ J92
	♠ Q1093
	♥ 52
	♦ A54
	♣ AQ87

Reflex plays are your enemy here. The instinctive play is to win the trick with the diamond queen, and then start thinking.

Let's move on. All things being equal, you should play for spades to be 2-2, rather than sniff out some sort of finesse. What other chances do you have? Well if you can play a low spade through someone's singleton ace, the ace will beat air. So Point 1 is to lead a low spade from one of the hands.

Any 4-0 breaks will show up on the first trick, allowing a proven finesse if you are in a position to take it. On this deal, you cope with 4 spades on your right only - if they are on your left, LHO has 2 natural trump tricks.

So Point 2 is that you should lead a low spade from your hand, picking up both singleton ace on your left, and void on your left.

Now where were we? The diamond queen has just held, but you want to play spades from hand. So overtake with the ace, and lead your spade three. The diamond queen was just there to trap you.

RECENT RESULTS

GNOT Metropolitan Final

- 1 A. Mill, J. Stark, J. Howard, S. Hinge, P. Hollands
- 2 T. Strong, J. Magee, A. Krolikowski, R. Stewart, D. Sheather, P. Schroor
- 3 W. Scott, I. McCance, G. Chettle, D. Smart, F. Beale, G. Kilvington

VBA Grand Prix Pairs

- =1 R. Kaplan – L. Young
 =1 R. Livingston – S. Klofa
 =1 R. Szabo-Bencze – S. Vardi

SETTING TRICK – SOLUTIONS Ian McCance

Problem 1:

Dealer: W	♠ J9
Vul: nil	♥ QJ65
	♦ Q93
	♣ AKJ2
♠ Q1084	♠ AK2
♥ K	♥ 874
♦ K742	♦ J1065
♣ Q963	♣ 1084
	♠ 7653
	♥ A10932
	♦ A8
	♣ 75

On this auction declarer could have started with 5 spades, all the more reason to switch. Try a diamond. This is run to partner's ♦K and later on he makes his bare ♥K. At the other table spades were continued at trick 3, and declarer had time to lose the heart finesse and realise she had to finesse clubs to get rid of her low diamond.

Problem 2:

Dealer: N	♠ J975
Vul: N/S	♥ KQJ8
	♦ K6
	♣ Q106
♠ Q	♠ 86
♥ 7432	♥ A96
♦ J942	♦ AQ875
♣ A542	♣ J83
	♠ AK10432
	♥ 105
	♦ 103
	♣ K97

Partner will just have to hold ♣A, else declarer will take at least 6 spades, a club and 3 hearts. What is important is that partner doesn't continue clubs. The best card is probably ♣8 (though ♣J is also probably OK). Partner will get the message and switch again.