

Victorian Bridge Association Bulletin

June 2011

Editor: Bill Jacobs



ABF **vba**

2011 VICTOR CHAMPION CUP

VENUE: New Melbourne Convention Centre
Opposite Crown Casino

9th June — 13th June
10 am start each day, no night play

NOTE: NEW OPEN PAIRS EVENT

Swiss Pairs: McCance Seniors*, VCC Womens*, VCC Restricted, Wally Scott Open: June 9 -10
Swiss Teams: Victor Champion Cup*, Charlie Snashall Trophy Restricted: June 11 -13

Tournament Organiser: Mary Bertuna (03) 9589 3537 or 0419 340 504
Email: vcc2011@abf.com.au Website: www.vba.asn.au/vcc2011

Restricted: Less than Life Master © 01/04/11

Gold Points and *Playoff Points
Run by the Victorian Bridge Association under license from the ABF

Special ABF Prize for 1st & 2nd Restricted Pairs

ANC IS COMING TO MELBOURNE JULY 23 – AUGUST 4

Victoria is hosting the Australian National Championships in 2011. The venue is the Powerhouse Function Centre, Lakeside Drive, Albert Park.



The ANC is a great opportunity for locals to compete against bridge players from all over the country. There are Gold point events, such as the Butler Pairs (Open, Women,

Seniors) and the ANC Swiss Pairs and Restricted Swiss Pairs.

Alongside the championships, red point events will be held throughout the 13 days. The program for the championship events is currently available on the website at <http://www.vba.asn.au/anc2011/>, and the Congress side events will be published soon.

The Powerhouse Function Centre is easily accessible by public transport and parking is available nearby. Wilson Car Park, entered from Lorne St, has an early bird rate, in before 10 am, for \$10 a day. A daily parking rate at the Sebel across the road is \$16. We may be able to obtain further good rates from nearby public parking places.

The Victory Dinner will be held on Friday 29th July at the venue. The cost of \$85 includes canapés, a three-course meal and drinks. Everyone is invited to attend this dinner, and tickets will be available from Kim Frazer.

The ANC only comes to our state once every eight years. Don't miss the opportunity to play in a major national event without having to fly.

PET PEEVES
Bill Jacobs

The opponents open the bidding and you overcall in a suit. Or perhaps you open the bidding with a natural suit bid, and they overcall.

Whichever, the opponents now take over the auction, and at some point, your right-hand opponent bids your suit.

We have arrived at:

The Pointless Double Peeve

I don't know why people so automatically double a cue-bid of the suit they have bid. Is it some faint hope that the opponents will accidentally pass it out? Or do they just feel the need to stay involved in the auction?

Let me give an example. East held:

♠ 10 ♥ KQJ94 ♦ KQ86 ♣ 843

and overcalled 1♥ in this auction:

West	North	East	South
	1♣	1♥	1♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥	?	

Knowing that 4♥ couldn't possibly make, he doubled! Here's the full deal:

	♠ KQ74	
	♥ A1032	
	♦ 5	
	♣ AQJ2	
♠ J93		♠ 10
♥ 765		♥ KQJ94
♦ J1074		♦ KQ86
♣ K97		♣ 843
	♠ A8652	
	♥ 8	
	♦ A932	
	♣ 1065	

Without the double, South had been about to sign off in 4♠. He'd been prepared to make one slam try with the 4♦ bid, but certainly not to go past 4♠ unless partner wanted to.

But the double gave him a new option, and the auction continued:

West	North	You	South
	1♣	1♥	1♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥	D'ble	Red'ble
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♥
Pass	5NT	Pass	6♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

South took the free hit of redoubling to show his second round control in hearts. That was just what North wanted to hear: with a likely singleton heart opposite, the hand was magic, and they waltzed into the good slam.

The problem with these pointless doubles is just that: they have no point. You've already told your partner about your hearts: the only reason to tell him again is if he is deaf.

To avoid the temptation of the pointless double, try playing undoubles. If you bid a suit, and then subsequently double a cue bid of that suit, it says to partner: don't lead my suit – look elsewhere.

For example:

	♠ J105	
	♥ A4	
	♦ AKQ108	
	♣ A96	
♠ Q9		♠ A8742
♥ Q7652		♥ K103
♦ 93		♦ 72
♣ 10875		♣ KJ4
	♠ K63	
	♥ J98	
	♦ J654	
	♣ Q32	

West	North	East	South
	1♦	1♠	2♦
Pass	2♠	?	

East is quite sure South is about to bid notrumps. A spade lead seems undesirable – after all, West didn't raise spades. So he makes an undouble of 2♠ to suggest that partner seeks other options – it's just a suggestion, not a command.

Sure enough, West had been about to lead the ♠Q to 3NT – but after East's undouble, a heart is chosen, and 3NT is sunk.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

PANACHE - XIII
Ben Thompson

The playoff to be the second USA team at this year's world championship (Bermuda Bowl) may be seen in years to come as a changing of the guard in world bridge, featuring a dynamic victory by the young Bathurst team (average age 31). None played better than Joel Wooldridge (31). My favourite hand is this slam at the half-way mark in their quarterfinal win over the powerful Nickell squad, the defending Bermuda Bowl champions. It's not perfect, but the context makes it great.

Dealer: S	♠ AK874		
Vul: E/W	♥ A864		
	♦ AQ		
	♣ 98		
♠ J965		♠ 10	
♥ J52		♥ Q94	
♦ 10843		♦ J65	
♣ 73		♣ QJ10642	
	♠ Q32		
	♥ K107		
	♦ K972		
	♣ AK5		

Hamman West	Hurd North	Zia East	W'dridge South
			1NT ¹
Pass	2♣ ²	D'ble	2♦ ³
Pass	3♥ ⁴	Pass	3♠ ⁵
Pass	4♦ ⁶	Pass	4♥ ⁶
Pass	4NT ⁷	Pass	5♦ ⁷
Pass	5♥ ⁸	Pass	5NT ⁹
Pass	6♠	Pass	6NT ¹⁰
Pass	Pass	Pass	

- 1 14-16(17)
- 2 Stayman
- 3 Club stopper, no major
- 4 5 spades, 4 hearts, game force
- 5 Agrees spades
- 6 Cue bids, 1st or 2nd round control
- 7 Keycard Blackwood; 1 or 4 keys shown
- 8 Got the spade queen?
- 9 Yes, and extras
- 10 This looks safer

Look at the kind of detail world-class pairs cover in their agreements.

8-time world champion Jeff Meckstroth, sitting in Wooldridge's chair for Nickell, also landed in 6NT after the same 1NT-2♣-D'ble

start. Both Wests led the ♠7. Meckstroth has been terrifying defenders with his brilliant cardplay for over 30 years. Watch how Wooldridge outplayed Meckstroth.

Meckstroth won the opening lead and played spades from the top. A world champion commentating on BBO pointed out that ♠10 dropping doesn't make this a restricted choice situation (you're missing **two** equal honours, unlike the usual QJ-missing situation). Playing for the drop is about 5% better than playing for singleton 10.

Wooldridge, however, knew the odds in more detail. On the auction and lead, clubs are 6-2 (maybe 7-1). When righty has 4 more known cards than lefty, the 2nd round finesse is about 3% better than the drop. Wooldridge duly won the opening lead like Meckstroth, cashed the ♠Q like Meckstroth ... and finessed the ♠8 to pick up 14 imps and a 36-imp half-time lead to sleep on.

Expert aside: When I asked Wooldridge about his thoughts on this hand, he was unhappy with his own play. He wants to cash ♦AQ before playing on spades. Why? Two reasons. One, cashing the ♦AQ may reveal a 6-1 break the other way, and change the best line in the spade suit back to the drop. Two, if the spade finesse loses, he can likely get back to 12 tricks on a squeeze, but on many layouts, he has to get what are called 'idle' diamonds out of East's hand first. That's one of the reasons Meckstroth couldn't recover after his first 3 tricks (try it).¹

The takeaways

As a very rough guide, if you're thinking of taking an unusual early finesse, you usually need the opponents to have a 5 card difference in their known cards to take that finesse if your fit is 7 or 8 cards. If your fit is longer, a 2 card difference is usually enough.

The bonus takeaway is about the champion's mindset. Champions always want to be better. Wooldridge wasn't satisfied with outplaying one of the game's greats in a huge match, and that's why I'm sure Wooldridge will win a swag of world championships.

¹ Once you've finished with 6NT, try 6♠. In 6♠ you need neither a spade guess nor a squeeze ... BJ

MYSTERIES OF DEFENCE

Bill Jacobs

One of the great challenges of defence is that no one rings a bell for you:

Dealer: N ♠ AQ8743
 Vul: All ♥ J852
 ♦ 8
 ♣ K9

♠ J9
 ♥ Q1097
 ♦ 764
 ♣ 8753

Me	North	East	South
	1♠	2♦	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

This deal was from the recent Altman Swiss Pairs, and I sat West. Defend along with me and see what you think.

I led ♦4, partner won the ace (declarer ♦3) and returned ♦9 to declarer's king, as I played ♦7.

Declarer led ♠6, I followed with ♠9 and declarer put in the queen.

Well? OK so far?

Not OK. I'd already butchered the defence, handing declarer 3NT on a platter.

Here is the full deal:

Dealer: N	♠ AQ8743	
Vul: All	♥ J852	
	♦ 8	
	♣ K9	
♠ J9		♠ K102
♥ Q1097		♥ 3
♦ 764		♦ AJ10952
♣ 8753		♣ QJ2
	♠ 65	
	♥ AK64	
	♦ KQ3	
	♣ A1064	

Partner won ♠K and returned a third diamond. Declarer played his second spade, and when my jack popped up, he was able to let it win. With me left on lead holding no more diamonds, 3NT was an easy make.

I should have played ♠J on the first round, clearing the way for partner to win the vital third round of the suit. There was no risk to this: if declarer had started with ♠10x, there was nothing I could do to stop the spades being established with only one loser.

(If dummy was missing ♠8, the decision is more complicated, but I was looking at dummy.)

You could argue that partner shouldn't have released ♦A at trick 1, but that is truly irrelevant. Even if partner had blundered, that doesn't mean that you should return the compliment with a blunder of your own.

No one rang a bell for me at trick 3. I was just following suit, minding my own business, and suddenly I had given declarer a 3NT contract that had been about to go two down. It's a huge problem and I don't know the solution. I suspect that if a similar situation comes up in a year's time, I will make the same error.

In previous articles, my premise has been that the secret to winning defence is to construct a possible full deal and play to it. But you can't be continually doing that every time you play to a trick.

For every trick, you are playing either the 1st, 2nd, 3rd or 4th card. If playing the 1st card, it means you are on lead, and that is certainly the time to make a mental construction of the full deal in order to assist your choice. And it is more socially acceptable to take your time when on lead.

If playing the 3rd card to the trick, it means your partner has started the trick, and it's certainly appropriate to ask yourself: "why did he lead that suit?". And playing the 4th card to the trick usually entails less decision making. If you're not winning the trick, then at most you are signalling to your partner, and if you are winning the trick, then fine, win it. That's not to say decisions don't exist when completing a trick, but they are rarer.

Playing 2nd to a trick is the tough game. There are often tempo issues: you need to follow low smoothly for example. You are in the process of reacting to declarer's card. 2nd card play is one of the most difficult of defensive mysteries.

SYSTEM MUSINGS
Bill Jacobs

What is the world's best bidding system?

Everyone asks themselves this question, and most have an answer: "the one that I play".

It's a difficult question to answer in theory, because other issues intrude. For example, if you are starting a partnership from scratch, most likely you will choose some sort of natural system as a base, because that's going to be the quickest route to an effective partnership. So natural methods tend to win by default.

Nevertheless, in the last decade or so, system innovation around the world has seemed to ground to a halt. There is a lot of gadgetizing: invention of conventional bids within a system, but hardly any new system in the global sense. Perhaps they have all already been invented. The most recent new approach is probably Polish Club, and that system is at least 10 years old by now.

In the Victorian scene, Polish club² is unknown. The vast majority play either Acol or Standard American. There are a few Precisioners about, perhaps due to the influence of Jim and Norma Borin, but their numbers are dwindling³.

In terms of global popularity, your guess is as good as mine, but my general conclusion from watching major league bridge on the internet, and also from attending the recent World Championships, is that standard methods dominate. By "standard", I mean: strong 1NT opening, 5-card majors and suspect 1-minor openings.

At the Australian national level, a reasonable set of data is available, by examining the systems played at the recent Australian team playoffs.

² The Polish 1♣ opening is basically either a weak notrump or medium-strong opening with clubs, or some other very strong hand. Other 1-level openings are limited to about 17 points.

³ Nevertheless, it should be noted that for the current World Champions, the American Diamond team, two of the three pairs play a straightforward brand of Precision.

In the following tables, I have defined "Standard" as a natural-based system with a strong 1NT opening. Acol is defined as a natural-based system with a weak 1NT opening.

Open Playoff

Standard	20 pairs ⁴
Acol	2 pairs
Modified Polish club	1 pair
Fantunes	1 pair

Women's Playoff

Standard	5 pairs
Acol	13 pairs

Seniors Playoff

Standard	13 pairs
Acol	2 pairs
Polish club	1 pair
Precision	1 pair
Strong club	1 pair

Acol major suit length breakdown:

5-card majors	3 pairs
4-card majors	8 pairs
5 spades, 4 hearts	6 pairs

So of the 60 pairs competing, a healthy majority play Standard, a solid minority, mainly women (for some reason I can't explain) play Acol, and just five pairs play Something Else.

The Fantunes system will be described another day.

If you're into resulting, the winning Open team all played Standard, the winning Women's team all played Acol, and the winning Seniors team had two pairs playing Standard, and one playing Strong club.

So this analysis certainly doesn't tell us what is the world's best system. One wouldn't expect it to. But I'll say this: in one important respect, I think that the pairs playing Acol are using clearly superior methods to those playing Standard.

... to be continued

⁴ Two pairs playing 4-card majors, the remainder 5-cards.

AFFILIATED CLUB NEWS

Winning \$ at Waverley

Waverley Bridge Club is running a monthly competition on Friday evenings. If you play at least 3 Friday evenings in any calendar month, you will be in the running for considerable cash prizes.

They will be awarded to the two players with the highest overall percentage; and also the pair who on the final night have a percentage score closest to a randomly chosen value in the range 48% - 53%.

There will be a prize pool of at least \$300 to be divided evenly among the 4 players. This amount is guaranteed, but the more players who enter, the larger the 'pot' will grow.

It's a 7:30 pm start at the Waverley Clubrooms: 21B Electra Ave, Ashwood. Entry fee per week is between \$9 and \$12.

Enjoy a glass of wine or a beer while you enjoy a good night's bridge.

Ring Mary on 9807 6502 if you need more information.

Postcards at Paynesville

In February 2011, Paynesville Bridge Club was invited to join 6 other clubs to play in an "International Postcard Competition".

The event was organised by Bob Simpson, from the Westwood Bridge Club in Massachusetts USA, and also included Rye Beach, Echuca and Paynesville Bridge Clubs in Victoria and American clubs Newton and Westwood Bridge Clubs in Massachusetts, Bridge Ace in Florida, and the Bridge Studio in Delaware.

The event was played on the first Thursday of February, March, April and May with the deal files being produced by Westwood and sent out to participating clubs a few days prior to each session. At the completion of each session, results were posted on the Bridgewebs site (similar to Nationwide Pairs on BridgeUnlimited: see the December 2010 newsletter). Only the best 3 scores of the 4

sessions were used and players could play with different partners each session if they wished as the event was scored up for an Individual winner.

The overall winner was Frank Power from Paynesville Bridge Club with an average of 63.42% over the 4 sessions, just ahead of a player from Florida and in third place Massachusetts.

The winning club each month received a postcard from all other participating clubs - hence the name of the competition.

COMING UP AT THE VBA ... BOARD-A-MATCH TEAMS

Dates: Wednesdays June 8, 15, 22

Format: Depends on entries: either Swiss or round-robin format. Your team plays matches against other teams: on each board you get 2, 1 or 0 points, depending whether you got a better, equal or worse score than your opponents. "Winning" the board by 10 points (eg +630 as against -620) is a win!

Why you should enter:

This is the only board-a-match event you can play in: there is no board-a-match event on the ABF's national calendar.

Nevertheless, board-a-match is a legitimate form of scoring, and is indeed used for one of the four North American Nationals: the Reisinger Teams.

Board-a-match is regarded as the form of scoring where the luck factor is reduced to a minimum: less than IMPs, less than matchpoints.

There is less luck than in IMPs because if your opponents bid and make a *poor* slam, then in IMPs you have lost a massive 13 imps: in b-a-m, it's just one lost board.

There is less luck than in matchpoints because if your opponents bid and make a *good* slam, then your teammates have the opportunity to do the same.

Board-a-match format is the truest test of bridge skill that there is.

RECENT RESULTS

Victorian Women's Team Selection

- 1 J. Magee – J. Thompson
- 2 S. Collins – M. Woods
- 3 M. Yuill – M. Allison

Victorian Senior's Team Selection

- 1 B. Tencer – G. Gaspar
- 2 J. Pettitt – A. Meydan
- 3 A. Krolikowski – A. Kaszubski

Fred Altman Swiss Pairs

- 1 N. Ewart – B. Howe
- 2 R. van Riel – D. Smith
- 3 I. McCance – G. Kilvington

Victorian Master Teams

Section A

- 1 S. Arber, T. Chira, L. Meyer, D. Hohor
- 2 M. Tencer, M. Chrapot, G. Gaspar, H. de Jong
- 3 A. Branicki, M. Gurfinkiel, B. Howe, S. Weisz

Section B

- 1 B. A'Beckett, M. Allison, H. Stewart, A. Murray
- 2 A. Lockwood, N. Howard, L. Henbest, P. Gardiner
- 3 D. Flynn, J. Percil, C. Macquarrie, K. Trolland

RECENT MASTER PROMOTIONS

Local Master	Eduardo Weisinger
*Local Master	Pam Smith Valerie Sterling
**Local Master	John McCrae
National Master	John Adams Christine Louie
Silver Life Master	Christina Macquarrie

BRIDGE WORKSHOPS : 5 - 6 JUNE 2011

<p>SUNDAY 5th JUNE 10.00 am – noon</p> <p>Cue Bid (Painlessly) to Slam</p> <hr/> <p>MONDAY 6th JUNE 9:30 am – 11:30 am</p> <p>What to do after a 1NT response</p>	<p>Where: Victorian Bridge Association 131 Poath Street Murrumbena</p> <p>Cost: \$15 per workshop or both for \$25.</p> <p>About the teacher: Joan Butts is an expert bridge teacher, and an experienced player, who has represented Australia and Queensland. She has developed a new, easy approach to teaching bridge.</p>
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For further information, or to make a booking, phone the Victorian Bridge Association on (03) 9530 9006 or Joan Butts on 0413 772 650.

SETTING TRICK - PROBLEMS

Problem 1:

Dealer: N ♠ A
 Vul: nil ♥ K985
 ♦ Q74
 ♣ AKQJ7

♠ J106
 ♥ A10
 ♦ AJ953
 ♣ 1094

West	North	East	South
	1♣	1♦	1♠
Pass	2♥	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Partner leads ♦2 and your ♦J takes trick 1. You continue ♦A and another diamond, which is trumped in South. Declarer crosses to ♠A and leads a heart.

What next?

Problem 2:

Dealer: N ♠ J432
 Vul: E/W ♥ 7
 ♦ AKQ9
 ♣ AK106

♠ K76
 ♥ KQ85
 ♦ J1075
 ♣ J9

West	North	East	South
	2♣ ¹	Pass	2♦ ²
Pass	3♦ ³	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

- 1 3-suited hand
- 2 Strong relay
- 3 16-18 HCP, singleton major

You lead ♥K, won by declarer, partner following ♥J. Declarer ruffs a heart in dummy (partner ♥10). Now from dummy ♣A, ♣K, (declarer a heart), ♦A, ♦K and ♦Q, (declarer a heart). Then ♣6, ruffed with declarer's ♠5.

You overtrump and pause to consider your next move. Which is?

Solutions over page.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

CASES FOR ACES – XI
THE OPPONENTS INTERVENE
Bill Jacobs

It doesn't happen often, but it's best to be prepared. In a competitive auction, your partner bids 4NT Blackwood, and your RHO makes a bid.

Here are three possible schemes:

DOPI/ROPI Double/Redouble = **0** aces,
 Pass = **1**, next step = 2, etc

PODI/PORI Pass = **0** aces,
 Double/Redouble = **1**, next
 step = 2, etc

DOPE/ROPE Double/Redouble = **Odd**
 number of aces, Pass = **Even**
 number of aces

(The redouble option is when the opponents double 4NT; the double option is when they bid.)

You just have to choose one. The third of these, DOPE/ROPE, is probably obsolete with the advent of Roman Key Card Blackwood, where there is more to the response than just a single number.

In the 35 years I have been playing competitive bridge, this has come up twice. The first time, in the final of the Pennant, I was playing DOPI/ROPI, which after all, is the method with the catchiest name. I bid 4NT, the next hand bid 5-something, and partner, who had a terrible hand with no aces, passed in relief. "Knowing" that partner had one ace, I bid the slam ... and the defence cashed their two aces.

That cost us the match. So I switched to PODI/PORI, which is psychologically sounder, because now the weak-sounding Pass shows no aces.

20 years later, in the recent World Open Teams in Philadelphia, my partner bid 4NT, the next hand doubled, and my brain chose to stop working. I ignored the double and gave the zero key-card response of 5♣. My partner, knowing I had two key-cards, tried for a grand slam, reluctantly signed off in six ... and the defence cashed their two aces.

My right-hand opponent's double, which was made specifically to test whether we had an agreement, was most definitely **not** in the category of "pointless doubles". Well, we had an agreement all right, but that's of little use if your brain is non-functional.

SETTING TRICK – SOLUTIONS
Ian McCance

Problem 1

Dealer: N	♠ A	
Vul: nil	♥ K985	
	♦ Q74	
	♣ AKQJ7	
♠ 974		♠ J106
♥ J632		♥ A10
♦ K102		♦ AJ953
♣ 632		♣ 1094
	♠ KQ8532	
	♥ Q74	
	♦ 86	
	♣ 85	

Declarer must have ♥Q and is trying to cross back to hand to draw trumps. There can be no way that playing ♥A now will cost a trick, dummy is rich. Your only hope will be ♠9 in partner's hand so go for it - rise ♥A and play a diamond.

Problem 2

Dealer: N	♠ J432	
Vul: E/W	♥ 7	
	♦ AKQ9	
	♣ AK106	
♠ K76		♠ Q10
♥ KQ85		♥ J10
♦ J1075		♦ 862
♣ J9		♣ Q87542
	♠ A985	
	♥ A96432	
	♦ 43	
	♣ 3	

Declarer's hand shape is 4621. Does anything strike you as strange? All those high cards and never a round of trumps. Maybe his trumps aren't too good, and partner can over-ruff dummy for sure. So out with a heart and cross-ruff merrily. That racket at the end of the hand is declarer trying to explain why he didn't trump the third club with ♠8.