

Victorian Bridge Association Bulletin

November 2011

Editor: Bill Jacobs

A (YOUTH) BRIDGE TRIATHLON

This fine concept is the creation of Youth Bridge Victoria, a.k.a. Laura Ginnan. The three events are not swimming, cycling and running, but instead:

- IMPs
- Matchpoints
- Individual

The inaugural triathlon will be held at the Waverley Bridge Club on the weekend of December 3rd, and is open to anyone aged 30 or under.

To find out more, go to the internet site <http://www.vba.asn.au/php/youth.php>.

How do you think you would go in such an event? What would be your strong and weak stages? I think I would hope to be with the pack coming out of the IMPs water, cycle hard to the lead during the Matchpoint stage, and then try to somehow hang on through the gruelling Individual!

Speaking of Youth Bridge, the latest gossip is about the startling fact that the average age of an ACBL (American Contract Bridge League) member has hit 70.

Now this has resulted in much wailing and gnashing of teeth on bridge blog sites. For example, the highly respected Fred Gitelman (creator of Bridge Base Online) wrote:

"I greatly fear that there is not going to be much left of bridge in most parts of the world (certainly including America) in 40 years time. Even within 20 years bridge players are going to start dropping like flies. Some time in the not too distant future, the length of the "In Memoriam" page will surpass that of the "New Life Masters" page in the ACBL Bulletin."

I don't see what all the fuss is about. The average age of everything is going to go up, because people are living longer. Actually, when I first started subscribing to bridge magazines in the 1970s, there was regular

editorial gloom about what was wrong with bridge, how youth participation was falling: and predictions of imminent demise were common. It's never panned out that way, and over the last 30 years, the game has seemed to prosper.

The promotion of Youth bridge cannot happen by itself however. It needs a strong shove. In Israel, bridge is actually on the curriculum in many schools. The result of such an initiative is clear: the Israeli Junior team just won the Open Transnational event (150 teams) at the World Championships.

In Australia, bridge is not taught in schools, but there have been several initiatives to take bridge into schools at a casual level. This is sure to have had a positive effect. Youth bridge has benefited from the active efforts of Cathy and Andrew Mill in Victoria, and Peter Gill and David Stern in NSW. An excellent program of national events has been put into place, and the ABF has ensured our participation in international events.

It would seem that there is an on-going momentum here. However, bridge administrators can never relax when considering youth bridge, because of an unchangeable fact of life: Youth players don't remain Youth players for ever. There must be continual regeneration. This is why organizations like Youth Bridge Victoria are so important.

Actually that organization has a Facebook page, and this reminds me of the real reason why the future of bridge is bright. The internet. Bridge is perfectly suited to being played and publicised on the internet. It's been a particular pleasure to follow the World Championships just completed in the Netherlands. Not only do we have the option to watch a variety of matches on BBO, but we could also watch them with video, replay videos, read bulletins from the Championship website, and read, and participate in, blogs about the event.

And young people *love* the internet.

SYSTEM MUSINGS
Bill Jacobs

The magic bidding box

There once was a very well respected bridge player who had a little wooden box beside him on the table every time he played. Whenever there was a tough bidding decision to make he would open the box, look inside and then bid. Invariably the bid he made was the perfect one for the situation and his reputation and the legend of the magic wooden bidding box grew and grew.

After many years of playing the gentleman passed away and at his funeral his widow was asked "how much do you want for the magic box?". Since she didn't play bridge she decided to hold an auction. After spirited bidding, all puns intended, the magic box was purchased.

The buyer could not wait for his next bidding problem in a tournament. Early in the event he got his chance. In a quandary about what to bid he picked up his magic box and opened it. To his surprise embroidered in the widow's needlepoint on a velvet pillow was "PASS".

Alvin Roth, a leading American theorist of the second half of the 20th century, may have been that expert. His Roth-Stone system, played with Tobias Stone, emphasized strong requirements for initial action. Roth would regularly decide not to open the bidding with a 13 point hand, and his requirements for overcalling were equally rigorous.

Roth won many US national events in the 1940s, 50s and 60s. He was also a long-time contributor to the Bridge World magazine's Master Solvers Club – its bidding forum. He would often give answers like:

"Pass. Listen for now. I might never bid!"

Roth obviously did very well at the game, and I think the reasoning was basically this: if he simply shut up, the opponents would probably bid to the wrong contract and he would take them down. So there was no reason to rock the bidding boat.

This strategy worked well in the middle of the 20th century.

Early in the 21st century, if you just shut up, the opponents will probably bid to the *right*

contract. Bidding has come a long way in 50 years ... when I occasionally peruse magazines from many years ago, I see antiquated bidding leading to silly contracts: bidding you would not see at, say, an Affiliated Club congress in 2011.

So if I were to put an embroidered pillow into the magic bidding box in 2011, I'd probably make it "BID". Or more accurately: "BID NOW, PASS LATER".

What does this discussion mean for systems? Well, two things.

1. Systems need to have mechanisms for disrupting the opponents' bidding.

2. Systems need to have adequate agreements for competitive auctions.

In 2011, the effectiveness of your system depends almost entirely on how it deals with competitive auctions. Everything else is relatively unimportant. Whether you play a 2NT response to 1♠ as natural (invitational or forcing) or a spade raise: unimportant. Your choice of 3014 or 1430 Blackwood: unimportant. Fourth suit forcing to game or merely a one-round force: unimportant. Long or short suit game tries: unimportant.

Don't get me wrong: you need a partnership agreement on these issues: it's just that it doesn't matter much what it is.

What IS important is this hand:

♠ J754 ♥ KQ8654 ♦ J4 ♣ 8

You deal with everyone vulnerable. What do you bid? That's important.

Or partner opens 1NT, next hand bids a natural 2♦. What do you bid? Important.

Here are some statistics to back up my premise. I've been collecting data about competitive and non-competitive auctions.

	% of auctions	Average IMP swing
Non-competitive	44%	3.4
Competitive	56%	5.2

This data was collected over many sessions that I have played recently, and is very revealing.

A non-competitive auction is where one side passes throughout. All the rest are defined as "competitive". Think of that from a personal perspective: if 44% of all auctions are non-competitive, then that means that you have the bidding to yourself for only 22% of auctions ... the other half of the 44% belongs to your opponents.

So over 10 hands, for about 2 you will be uninvolved, for 2 you will have an auction to yourselves, and the remaining 6 will be competitive dog-fights.

And the third column makes it even starker. The average imp swing arising from competitive auctions is significantly greater. It makes sense: many of those non-competitive auctions (like 1NT-3NT) lead to the same contract at both tables, and therefore often the same result.

If you multiply it out, you will find that over two-thirds of all imps scored are from competitive auctions. Here is mathematical proof that the quality of your bidding system is mainly dependent on how it deals with competitive auctions.

Next month, we will return to
 ♠ J754 ♥ KQ8654 ♦ J4 ♣ 8
 and look at the system aspects of this hand.

THE TWELFTH TRICK

Dealer: N ♠ AKQ10
 Vul: N/S ♥ AKQ10
 ♦ K4
 ♣ A73

 ♠ 86432
 ♥ 63
 ♦ AJ109
 ♣ 62

West	North	East	South
	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♦	Pass	6♠

West leads ♣Q. You win and play a top spade on which East discards a low club. What next?

Solution on page 7.

VBA Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Victorian Bridge Association Limited will be held at the VBA Clubrooms, 131 Poath Road, Murrumbeena, Victoria, 3163 on Tuesday 6th December 2011 commencing at 6.30 p.m.

All Members Welcome

All financial members of the VBA are welcome to attend the AGM and enjoy a free game of duplicate bridge thereafter. Any person whose name does not appear on the register of financial members will not be entitled to vote.

Notice of Motion

Any member wishing to give notice for the AGM must lodge a copy of the details of the motion with the VBA Secretary, 131 Poath Road, Murrumbeena, Victoria, 3163 no later than close of business on Friday 4th November, 2011.

The details of any such motion must include the exact wording of the motion, the full names and ABF membership numbers of the mover and seconder of the motion, signed and dated by both members, and a short background/purpose of the motion.

A copy of each notice of motion will be sent to all members as part of the mail out of AGM papers.

Nominations for Council

All positions on Council will fall vacant on the date of the AGM.

Members are invited to nominate for the positions of President, Vice-President (2), Treasurer, Secretary and eight ordinary Councillors. The closing date for nominations is Tuesday 29th November 2011.

Please refer to the Nominations Sheet posted on the Green Scoring Board in the Sara Tishler Room.

MYSTERIES OF DEFENCE
Bill Jacobs

Here are two defensive problems which I ask you to solve in an unusual two-step way. In step 1, simply construct a hand for declarer – don't worry about your actual defence. Base your construction on the bidding and play to date, but choose a hand where it seems your defence might be relevant.

Step 2 will be the defence itself, but first, please just focus on step 1: **what might declarer's hand be.**

You are East. Assume scoring by imps.

Problem 1

Dir: N	♠ K5	
Vul: nil	♥ KQJ	
	♦ QJ10984	
	♣ AQ	
		♠ AQ743
		♥ 1052
		♦ A2
		♣ J65

West	North	East	South
	1♦	1♠	1NT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

Partner leads ♠9. Declarer plays ♠K from dummy.

Problem 2

Dir: S	♠ 6	
Vul: all	♥ J2	
	♦ A975	
	♣ A109542	
		♠ QJ52
		♥ K1093
		♦ J108
		♣ K7

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	3♦*	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♦	Pass	5♦
Pass	Pass	Pass	

* non-forcing

Partner leads ♥A and a second heart to your king: declarer follows low, queen.

Step 1: Declarer's hand

Problem 1. Partner's ♠9 is probably top of a doubleton, but perhaps it's a singleton. Let's give declarer ♠J10xx. As for the rest of the high cards, three are missing: ♥A, ♦K, ♣K. For the 1NT bid, South probably has two of them. If one is the ♦K, 3NT is an easy make by establishing the diamonds, so give partner that card.

That leaves something like this for South:

♠ J10xx ♥ Axx ♦ xxx ♣ Kxx

Problem 2. Declarer has ♥Qx, and from the 3♠ bid, it sounds like six spades. So 6241 shape is likely. Given all the bidding South has done after North's invitational 3♦, he seems certain to have ♠AK and ♦KQ. Perhaps:

♠ AKxxxx ♥ Qx ♦ KQxx ♣ Q

My major premise from previous articles is that the best way to unravel the mystery of any defence is to construct a hand for declarer and play to it. In which case, all the hard work has been done! All that remains is ...

Step 2: The Defence

Problem 1

Dir: N	♠ K5	
Vul: nil	♥ KQJ	
	♦ QJ10984	
	♣ AQ	
♠ 92		♠ AQ743
♥ 8763		♥ 1052
♦ K63		♦ A2
♣ 10873		♣ J65
	♠ J1086	
	♥ A94	
	♦ 75	
	♣ K942	

You didn't hastily win your ♠A before constructing declarer's hand, did you? I told you not to!

You must play an encouraging low card at trick 1. Partner wins the first diamond and plays his remaining spade, setting up the suit whilst you still have ♦A. If you win trick 1, your hand is separated from partner's, and 3NT makes.

Problem 2

Dlr: S	♠ 6	
Vul: all	♥ J2	
	♦ A975	
	♣ A109542	
♠ 83		♠ QJ52
♥ A8764		♥ K1093
♦ 43		♦ J108
♣ Q863		♣ K7
	♠ AK10974	
	♥ Q5	
	♦ KQ62	
	♣ J	

Declarer has no top losers remaining. He needs to set up spades, and that looks doable. But if you play a third heart here, giving away a useless ruff-and-discard, declarer has to expend a trump in a worthless cause. He no longer has sufficient trumps to make 5♦. Play it out for yourself and see.

Conclusions.

Neither of these defences was particularly easy, because in each case you had to make a play that is intuitively wrong.

On problem 1, you had to not cover an honour with an honour, holding ace-queen over dummy's king.

On problem 2, you had to give away a ruff-and-discard.

Neither play is easy to find until you have constructed a hand for declarer, and visualized how the play might proceed.

SPRING NATIONALS NOTABLES

There were several fine Victorian results from the Sydney nationals held in October:

Simon Hinge, playing with Kim Morrison, won the Dick Cummings Open Pairs, Australia's premier matchpoint pairs event.

Felicity Beale, partnered by Diana Smart, was on the winning team in the Women's Teams.

Felicity Beale, Rob van Riel and David Smith were runners-up in the Open Teams event.

SETTING TRICK - PROBLEMS

Problem 1:

Dealer: E	♠ Q109542
Vul: All	♥ -
	♦ Q52
	♣ AQ85
♠ 83	
♥ 98762	
♦ J64	
♣ J96	

West	North	East	South
		1♥	3♦*
3♥	3♠	4♥	D'ble
Pass	5♦	All Pass	

* intermediate

You lead ♥9 and declarer discards a club and partner's ♥A wins. He returns ♦8, covered by South's ♦9. Do you cover this? Why, or why not?

Problem 2:

Dealer: N	♠ Q95
Vul: E/W	♥ 532
	♦ Q9854
	♣ 74
♠ A1072	
♥ 4	
♦ 762	
♣ Q10653	

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	2NT*
Pass	3NT	All pass	

* 20-22

Your low club runs to partner's ♣8 and declarer's ♣9. Declarer plays ♦K, which wins, then ♦J, on which you complete your odd signal. Partner wins and produces ♥10, won by declarer's ♥Q. Declarer's next card is ♠3 and you have to plan your defence.

Solutions on page 7.

Kooyong Swiss Pairs Congress

Sunday 13th November, 10 a.m.
 Gourmet lunch. Cash prizes. Red points.
 No on-line entry available
 Contact: leeron.branicki@gmail.com

PANACHE - XVI
Ben Thompson

The world championships have just finished, but I'm going to ignore that and talk about a simple but strong play from 1970s Victorian rep and super-sub Helen Wilk. Try yourself on lead to 3NT.

Dealer: N	♠ J52				
Vul: E/W	♥ 643				
	♦ KQ1064				
	♣ K2				
♠ AK1084			♠ 763		
♥ K108			♥ A95		
♦ 2			♦ 8753		
♣ Q1093			♣ 874		
	♠ Q9				
	♥ QJ72				
	♦ AJ9				
	♣ AJ65				

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1NT
Pass	3NT	All pass	

Helen was substituting in the Pick team on the 2nd night of the Pennant, and I bet the Picks were glad they had Helen at the wheel on this board. What do you lead against 3NT? Obviously a spade, but which one? Helen chose to lead her spades out from the top. Many would lead a low one in case partner had, for example, Qx. Does it make a difference here? You betcha. 3NT is cold on a low spade lead, and cold off after 3 rounds of spades from the top.

To see why, first let's change seats to sit behind the very talented Lucy Henbest. Lucy was up to 8 tricks after Helen's lead. The standard, and correct, play in this situation is to cash up your long suit. You don't have to know anything about squeeze play to know that when you don't quite have the rest of the tricks, cashing your long suit can exert a lot of pressure on the defenders.

Hold this thought – Lucy wanted to jam Helen on lead late to force a club lead into her AJ, making no matter where the ♣Q was.

After cashing four diamonds, Lucy was down to ♥QJx and ♣AJx. Helen had pitched down to ♠x ♥Kx ♣Q109. On her last diamond, Lucy had an ugly choice. If she pitches a heart,

she can't safely exit a heart (the defenders can now take three hearts to beat the contract). If she pitches another club, she gives up her main chance of making the contract – the club finesse – and takes all the pressure off the defenders (they can pitch their clubs too). One off.

At the next table, I was fortunate to get a low spade lead. I played the same way as Lucy, but the difference was that on the last diamond, I had a useless little spade to throw. Now my West was inexorably nailed because I still had a heart guard (if he bares the ♥K, I toss him in with it after cashing ♣K; when he shorted the ♣Q, I just cashed my clubs from the top).

Now let's go back to Helen Wilk on opening lead. When you know you have virtually all of your side's assets on lead to 3NT, you don't have to know anything about squeezes to know that you're not going to have much fun pitching and that every time you have to lead, you're in danger of giving a trick away. No guarantees, but spades from the top solved those problems on this hand. Nice lead, Mrs Wilk.

Expert aside: Technically, the difference in the positions that Lucy and I reached is that I had an **idle card** left at the key moment while Lucy did not. Helen killed Lucy's idle spade by leading out spades from the top.

The takeaway

When you know you're sitting on all of your side's assets against 3NT, try leading your suit from the top instead of the more usual 4th highest to minimise the danger of being endplayed or squeezed or both.

COMING UP AT THE VBA ... CHRISTMAS TEAMS

Date: Wednesdays November 23, 30,
December 7, 14

Format: This Swiss teams event is a pleasant way to wind down the year. It is usually accompanied by an Xmas party at the conclusion of the final evening.

Defending champs: Peter Hollands, Leigh Gold, Bill Jacobs, Jenny and Ben Thompson

SETTING TRICK – SOLUTIONS
Ian McCance

Problem 1

Dealer: E	♠ Q109542	
Vul: All	♥ -	
	♦ Q52	
	♣ AQ85	
♠ 83		♠ AJ76
♥ 98762		♥ AQJ53
♦ J64		♦ 8
♣ J96		♣ K104
	♠ K	
	♥ K104	
	♦ AK10973	
	♣ 732	

It is important not to cover. Declarer's discard at trick one told you he doesn't have ♣K, so his side-suit tricks must come from spades. By retaining the ability to over-trump, you will be able to prevent their establishment.

Declarer really wants to be in dummy – let him use ♦Q on that ♦9.

Problem 2

Dealer: N	♠ Q95	
Vul: E/W	♥ 532	
	♦ Q9854	
	♣ 74	
♠ A1072		♠ K84
♥ 4		♥ K10986
♦ 762		♦ A103
♣ Q10653		♣ 82
	♠ J63	
	♥ AQJ7	
	♦ KJ	
	♣ AKJ9	

You need partner to have the missing diamond and ♠K, otherwise there is access to dummy's diamonds. Further, declarer must hold ♠J else why start spades? So the card you have to worry about is that ♠9. Declarer will no doubt finesse ♠9 to force ♠K and then you won't be able to prevent entry with ♠Q.

The card you have to find now is ♠10. Declarer will have to cover and partner can win. (She will need to return a club rather than another heart to avoid an end-play, but that is a different problem.) Playing ♠10 allows you to block that suit as long as the

missing ones were 3-3. You must rise ♠A in front of ♠9 to return another spade to ♠J or allow ♠J to win if that card is played first.

The defence would have been much easier had partner allowed ♦J to hold, but that would have deprived you of a brilliancy.

RECENT RESULTS

Victorian Individual

- 1 Peter Havlicek
- 2 George Lovrecz
- 3= Flossie Aizen
- 3= Chelliah Arul

Ern Palfreyman Teams

- 1 C. Arul, A. Kaszubski, K. French, D. Sharman
- 2 S. Klofa, J. Collins, P. Fent, R. Stewart
- 3 L. Gold, E. Hardy, C. Hughes, K. Bechet, H. Blakeman

GNOT Metropolitan Final

- 1 T. Strong, J. Magee, R. Gallus, S. Weisz
- 2 L. Henbest, L. Ginnan, A. Munro, M. Henbest, N. Howard, B. Kingham
- 3 S. Hinge, A. Mill, P. Hollands, J. Howard
- 4 R. Livingston, P. Hill, J. Fust, E. Samuel

These teams qualify for the national final, to be played at Tweed Heads in November.

THE TWELFTH TRICK
Bill Jacobs

Dealer: S	♠ AKQ10	
Vul: N/S	♥ AKQ10	
IMPs	♦ K4	
	♣ A73	
♠ J975		♠ -
♥ 54		♥ J9872
♦ Q875		♦ 632
♣ QJ4		♣ K10985
	♠ 86432	
	♥ 63	
	♦ AJ109	
	♣ 62	

There's a sure trick play here – you just have to think of it. *Overtake* ♦K with ♦A, and draw the rest of the trumps with a finesse. Take the three top hearts to discard your club loser, and now play on diamonds, losing to just the queen.

ABF ALERTING REGULATIONS

Until recently, all calls at the four-level or higher were classified as 'self-alerting': such calls never required an alert.

From October 1, the criterion for this category of self-alerting action has become:

- All calls at the four-level or higher, except conventional opening bids

The reason for this change is to cater for the use of Namyats and other 4-level Transfer Pre-empts. Previously such actions were theoretically supposed to have been pre-alerted, however, because they have such a low frequency of occurrence, this requirement was often overlooked. Note that it is only high-level conventional *opening* bids that have been removed from the 'self-alerting' classification. All other actions above the level of 3NT (whether conventional or not) will remain non-alertable.

Now this change is all very fine, and you may or may not be fascinated by it. But it does raise the question of how well you know and understand the rules of alerting that are in place in the VBA. The VBA follows the ABF's Alert Regulations, and these are stated in a detailed 10 page document available from the ABF web site at

<http://www.abf.com.au/events/tournregs/>

Have you read and digested these regulations recently? Neither had I, but we shouldn't feel too bad about that: after all, you probably don't peruse the rules of golf (now there's a document and a half!) before entering your club's annual championship.

Still, this might be a good time to recap the highlights of the ABF Alerting Regulations.

Despite the document size, the ABF rules are based on common-sense. That common sense is that you alert bids that are artificial in nature: bids that are not what they "sound" like. The typical example is a suit bid that doesn't necessarily show length in that suit, and/or shows length in another suit: transfer bids, multi and 2-suited openings, Bergen raises, suit openings that

could be very short in the suit, pass-or-correct bids, and the like.

You should also alert natural bids where the forcing or non-forcing nature of the bid might surprise your opponents. A good example is "negative free bids": you open a suit, they overcall, and partner bids a new suit, non-forcing ... you must alert that natural bid.

There are a number of potentially artificial bids that do not require an alert: they are designated as "self-alerting bids" in the regulations. They are:

- All doubles and redoubles
- Cue bid of the opponents' suit
- Bids higher than 3NT (but see the adjustment at the start of this article)
- 2♣ response to 1NT

There are two other types of alert.

The Pre-Alert is made at the start of a round or match. This is where you alert your opponents to some really unusual aspect of your system, for which they may need to discuss a defence. You have to use your judgment on what requires a pre-alert: examples would be transfer openings or pre-empts, canapé style bidding, transfer responses to 1♣, comic 1NT overcall. In particular, pre-alert unusual *self-alerting* bids, as this is the only opportunity to do so.

You should also pre-alert non-standard defensive carding methods, for example, leading low from a doubleton at trick 1.

A Post-Alert is where the *declaring* side, at the conclusion of the auction, draws attention to any unusual aspects of the auction. In particular, if your partner has failed to alert an artificial bid of yours, you need to raise this point now, and clear up any confusion. The opponents have the right to know your actual system agreements.

The rules for alerts can occasionally get quite complicated, particularly if there has been a system misunderstanding. But you will not go far wrong if you stick to the simple principle of alerting any bid that is artificial in nature: a suit bid that does not show that suit, or a notrump bid that does not indicate a desire to play in notrumps.