

Victorian Bridge Association Bulletin

February 2016

Editor: Bill Jacobs

THE SOAPBOX Ben Thompson



My bridge year usually starts off with a few light practice sessions in early January before diving in at the deep end in Canberra for the Summer Festival.

Three friends of my daughter started their bridge year by learning how to play bridge! I've suggested they try Youth Week at the Summer Festival next year. It's a serious bridge event but also a seriously social event. My niece, for example, only plays a few times a year but Youth Week is always on the agenda.

Which brings me to Michael Miller, our new schools bridge co-ordinator. Michael plans to bring bridge to more schools, and is asking for your help, whether big or small, to make it happen. More on that inside.

Bridge has proven benefits for young players, both in terms of socialisation and educationally. Do your kids/grandkids and their schools a favour and help introduce a bridge program!

Have a great year in bridge.



2015 AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE

Nominations are now open for the 2015 Awards for Excellence. These awards are designed to recognise individuals around the state who have made a significant contribution to our game during the last year, whether it is in your club or a broader role. Four award categories are available, and the same individual may be nominated in more than one category:

"Teacher of the Year"

"Official of the Year"

"Volunteer of the Year"

"Sportsmanship Award of the Year"

Last year's recipients - Mary Elson (Teacher), Chris Heesom (Volunteer) and Tim Woodley (Official) were all delighted to receive recognition as our inaugural winners. Any financial member of a Victorian Club may nominate a member for recognition with the winning nominees chosen by a panel comprising the Presidents of Eastern, Northern and Western Regions and the VBA President.

Further details and nominations forms are available on the VBA website or from your club secretary.

Pointless Trivia

A query from a reader sparked some mild speculation among the editorial staff. It is:

"Is there any research on the average rate of defeated contracts at duplicate bridge?"

Well, there *is* research in this area. But before we reveal the answer, you might like to speculate on the matter yourself.

FOR STARTERS

You pick up the following 11 pointer:

♠ J42 ♥ AKQJ ♦ 10842 ♣ 65

No one is vulnerable and you are the dealer. Do you open this hand, or pass?

The hearts are delightful, but 11 points is 11 points ... not really enough to open.

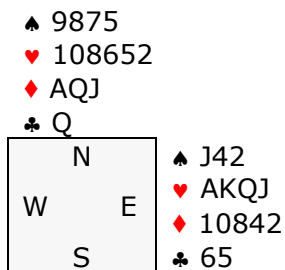
Suppose your red suits were swapped, so you now have ♦AKQJ. There would be some merit in opening 1♦, which will point partner towards the excellent diamonds, either in the bidding or on opening lead.

On this actual hand, you can't open 1♥, which would promise 5 hearts, and opening 1♦ is unhelpful.

You decide to pass, and the opponents then conduct the following slam-bang auction:

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
			Pass
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	3♠	Pass
6♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

Your partner is on lead to 6♠ and you rather hope he will lead a heart. But he lets you down, as partner's so often do, and leads the ♠3. This is what you see:



Declarer immediately calls for a low spade from dummy.

Don't rush. You are allowed to catch your breath and have a bit of a think about the hand as a whole, when dummy is revealed.

Having done so, decide on which card to play, which is ...?

"Third hand high" is a useful guideline, which works at least 51% of the time. So does "second hand low". Actually they are not really *that* useful, and are no substitute for thought.

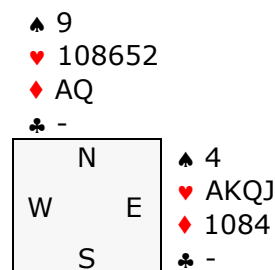
In this case, your thought should consider what partner's spade holding is. Declarer probably has four spades, so that gives partner two. He won't have Qx, Kx or Ax in spades – he is clearly leading from a low doubleton. "Third hand high" serves no purpose here, because it cannot possibly promote a high card for partner.

Now look at the hand as a whole. Declarer might want to trump clubs, the suit he opened in. You are short in clubs as well, and on the third round of the suit, may be able to over-trump dummy, as long as you still have the ♠J in your hand.

After this consideration, you play a low spade at trick 1, and declarer wins with the ♠10. He plays ♣A, and all follow. Now he trumps a low club, as partner follows with ♣9.

Next, declarer plays the ♦J from dummy, and wins with his ♦K (partner plays ♦5). Another low club is played, partner follows with ♣J, dummy trumps, and you over-trump with your carefully retained ♠J.

This is the position:



What now?

It's oh-so-tempting to play a top heart, and defeat this silly slam. But should you? Declarer might be void in hearts. And even if he has a heart, your heart trick will keep. After all, if declarer is able to discard a heart loser on one of dummy's top diamonds, would he not have done so earlier in the play?

Meanwhile, there is a more urgent matter to attend to ... getting rid of dummy's last trump. Declarer may want to ruff another diamond (and you cannot overruff this time), so let's play another round of trumps to kill that idea.

The full deal:

♠ 63	♠ 9875	♠ J42									
♥ 9743	♥ 108652	♥ AKQJ									
♦ 965	♦ AQJ	♦ 10842									
♣ KJ97	♣ Q	♣ 65									
<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>				N		W		E		S	
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ AKQ10										
	♥ -										
	♦ K73										
	♣ A108432										

Partner's ♣K is the setting trick.

Points to remember:

- As a matter of principle, don't open balanced 11 HCP hands.
- "Third hand high" requires discretion. It's only sensible when that high card is the ace, or when playing the high card may promote another honour, in your or partner's hand, into a winner. That was not possible on this deal.
- Not trying to cash a top heart needed some mental discipline – few would find it. A very big clue lay in the bidding: something that is often forgotten half-way through the play. Declarer had jumped to 6♠ without bothering to bid 4NT to ask for aces. Since he was missing two aces (your ♥A and dummy's ♦A), that indicates that he must have had a void somewhere.
- Last but not least, it is now time to congratulate partner on his choice of leads: a trump. It was well thought out, because partner had length and strength in declarer's first-bid suit. He was trying to reduce the ruffing power of dummy.



TEST YOUR BIDDING

Good Points and Bad Points

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
Pass	1♥	Pass	1♠
	2♠	Pass	?

In discussions between experts, you will hear comments like: "it was a really lousy 12-count" or "that's the best 6-count I ever held." What are they talking about?

High-card points don't tell the whole story. For example:

- points work better together
- points work better in your (or partner's) long suits
- aces are more than 4 times better than jacks
- not to mention distribution

And that's not the end of it. Tens and nines are worth something, but don't get a look-in on the 4-3-2-1 scale. And if your opponents bid, that adds a whole new set of factors.

The difference between a good bidder and a great bidder is the ability to move past the points when evaluating a hand. In fact, if you ever hear someone say: "that's not a very good 20-count", then ask them to have a game with you – that person is a star.

In the auction above, let's say you have 10 points. But is it a "good" 10 or a "bad" 10? Give each of the following 10-counts a rating from 1 (dreadful) to 10 (sensational). Oh, and choose a bid also.

- (a) ♠ A743 ♥ 852 ♦ KJ6 ♣ Q42
- (b) ♠ 108743 ♥ J10 ♦ AJ6 ♣ A42
- (c) ♠ AKJ103 ♥ Q2 ♦ 6 ♣ 98642
- (d) ♠ AKJ943 ♥ 2 ♦ Q1065 ♣ 42
- (e) ♠ A743 ♥ 52 ♦ Q65 ♣ KJ102
- (f) ♠ KJ102 ♥ 52 ♦ Q65 ♣ A743

Solutions over page.

TEST YOUR BIDDING - SOLUTIONS

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	?

(a) ♠ A743 ♥ 852 ♦ KJ6 ♣ Q42

2. Dead-flat shape is a minus. Now look at the minors. Partner is likely 4-5 in the majors, and therefore has 4 minor suit cards. Suppose partner has ♣xx: your ♣Q is worthless. Similarly, the ♦KJx are not great cards opposite a shortage. Downgrading secondary honours opposite a shortage is a crucial aspect of hand evaluation. Pass.

(b) ♠ 108743 ♥ J10 ♦ AJ6 ♣ A42

7. The aces are nice. And the ♥J10 might help bring in partner's hearts. The 5th spade is a bonus. Invite game with 3♠.

(c) ♠ AKJ103 ♥ Q2 ♦ 6 ♣ 98642

9. ♥Qx is pure gold, as is the diamond singleton. And the spades are none too shabby. Bid 4♠. It's possible to even have a slam.

(d) ♠ AKJ943 ♥ 2 ♦ Q1065 ♣ 42

8. This hand is not quite as good as (c), but the 6-card spade suit is very powerful. 4♠ might not make if partner has an unsuitable hand, but bidding less would be conservative.

(e) ♠ A743 ♥ 52 ♦ Q65 ♣ KJ102

4. This is not a great 10-count. The ♦Q must be devalued, and the clubs may or may not be useful. The lack of spots in the spade suit means you might not be able to successfully ruff the heart suit good. Pass.

(f) ♠ KJ102 ♥ 52 ♦ Q65 ♣ A743

6. This is hand (e), re-arranged. Now you have good interior spades, very suitable for ruffing hearts. And the ♣A is a certain winner. This hand is worth a 3♠ invitation.

Understanding the difference between hands (e) and (f) is probably the single biggest key to improving your bidding at bridge.

CONGRESS RESULTS**VBA Summer Congress***Swiss Pairs*

- 1 G. Johnson – C. Ding
- 2 M. Yuill – M. Allison
- 3 G. Lovrecz – K. Muntz

Swiss Teams

- 1 J. Magee, T. Strong, C. Ding, D. Wei
- 2 M. Willcox, M. Gurfinkiel, K. Chan, A. Krolikowski
- 3 K. Muntz, L. Gold, G. Bailey, K. Bailey

Gardenvale Congress*Boxing Day Swiss Pairs*

- 1 J. Howard – K. Anderson
- 2 G. Lovrecz – K. Muntz
- 3 S. Gluck – B. Kingham

Ed Hynes Swiss Teams

- 1 S. Klofa, S. Weisz, A. St Clair, D. Harley
- 2 F. Beale, R. van Riel, D. Beckett, N. Ewart
- 3 M. Yuill, S. Ozenir, K. Muntz, L. Gold

Paul Lavings Matchpoint Swiss Pairs

- 1 B. A'Beckett – S. Ozenir
- 2 G. Lovrecz – K. Frazer
- 3 D. Wei – C. Ding

Gardenvale Swiss Pairs

- 1 G. Peston – A. Meydan
- 2 A. Glasson – K. Radcliffe
- 3 J. Adams – H. Stewart

Gardenvale Swiss Teams

- 1 S. Klofa, R. Gallus, A. St Clair, D. Harley
- 2 J. Magee, T. Strong, C. Ding, D. Wei
- 3 S. Hawkins, J. Howard, A. Mill, A. Hegedus

Tricks and Trumps Congress*Matchpoint Pairs*

- 1 S. Klofa – R. Gallus
- 2 J. Yang – M. Zhang
- 3 L. Shaw – C. Chakravorty

Swiss Pairs

- 1 L. Woolf – M. Chrapot
- 2 M. Yuill – S. Ozenir
- 3 G. Ghali – V. Zhang

UPCOMING CONGRESSES

Yarra Valley Super Congress

Friday 5th February, 7:30 pm: Welcome Pairs
 Saturday 6th February, 10 am: Swiss Pairs
 Sunday 7th February, 10 am: Swiss Teams

Venue: Dorset Garden Hotel
 335 Dorset Road
 Croyden

Contact: Clare Stratton, 9725 9806

Enter: <http://bridgeunlimited.com>

Dendy Park Summer Congress

Sunday 14th February, 10 am: Swiss Pairs

Venue: Brighton Bowls Club Rooms
 Breen Drive
 Brighton East

Enter: <http://www.dpbridge.com/entry.php>

Eastern Region Congress

Saturday 13th February, 10 am: Swiss Pairs
 Sunday 14th February, 11 am: Swiss Teams

Venue: Sale Turf Club
 1227 Maffra-Sale Rd
 Sale

Contact: Don Tylee, 0478 076 082

Enter: <http://bridgeunlimited.com>

*** this congress is limited to current or past members of ERBA clubs

RECENT MASTER PROMOTIONS

State

Genny Binns	Ballarat
Timothy Burke	MCC
Margaret Carlton	Moonee Valley
Ian Cooke	Geelong
Arie De Rooy	Yarrawonga
Diane Horigan	Moonee Valley
Sara Levy	Dendy Park
Yao Jian Lu	VBA
Robert McDonald	Frankston

Debbie McKenzie	Ballarat
Jenny Monger	Benalla
Rob Nurse	MCC
Bernadette O'Dea	Ocean Grove
Andrew Poole	Whittlesea
Elizabeth Mary Ryan	Dendy Park
Winifred Sebire	Benalla
Mike Sorrell	Ballarat
Gavin Wigginton	Traralgon

*State

John Campbell	Ballarat
Sheila Cook	Frankston
Joan Davis	Geelong
Alan Everington	Ballarat
Susan Lipton	Gardenvale
Rosemary Monotti	Bendigo
Ming Zhang	VBA

National

Peter Bolling	Ballarat
Mary Church	South Yarra
George Del Papa	Ocean Grove
Margaret Glover	Geelong
Jillian Griffith	Dendy Park
Paul Kron	VBA
Michael McTiernan	Dendy Park
Glenice Thomson	Ballarat

*National

Rex Fox	Macedon Ranges
Michael Halfpenny	Moonee Valley
Barbara Hyett	Bendigo
Kay Kneebone	Moonee Valley
Sarah Livingston	Dromana
Ilse Porritt	Bairnsdale
Leo Saoud	Moonee Valley

**National

Kathryn Attwood	VBA
Ursula Brett	Yarra Velley
Lorna Holmes	Ballarat
Bill Jones	Geelong
Pam Jones	Geelong
Elaine Mann	Wodonga
Kaye McFarlane	Ballarat

Life

Gordon McRobert	Moonee Valley
Jacqui Morton	Moonee Valley
Carol Woodley	Ballarat

Bronze Life

Yvonne Mears	Phillip Island
Danny Sharp	Gardenvale
Victor Zhang	Moonee Valley

Silver Life

Dianna Middleton	VBA
Stephen Sharp	Dendy Park

SUMMER FESTIVAL - CANBERRA

Congratulations to all those who did well in the recent nationals in Canberra. Some standout results from Victorians:

Australian Youth Teams:

1st Max Henbest

2nd Jamie Thompson

(Max and Jamie also qualified to play in the 2016 Australian Junior Representative Team.)



An engrossed kibitzer

Australian Women's Teams:

1st Felicity Beale, Diana Smart

2nd Eva Caplan, Jenny Thompson,
Helen Snashall, Cathie Lachman

Australian Mixed Teams:

1st Laura Ginnan, Simon Hinge

VICTORIAN CONGRESS CHAMPION 2015

Congratulations to the 2015 congress champion, young gun Justin Howard. Justin won an impressive 7 congress events and racked up a mighty 70.5 points during the year. Chelliah Arul came in 2nd with 60.3 points and 4 wins.

The best female congress player of the year was Jill Magee, finishing on 46.4 points and just 0.2 clear of Kim Frazer.

And the best Under Life Master congress player was Chen Ding, who came in 3rd overall as well with 56 points.

The best congress players by club are listed below. We congratulate all on their congress performances in 2015. The full list of VQP awards for 2015 is available on the VBA website.

Club	Champion	VQPs
Alphington	Justin Howard	70.5
Bairnsdale	Joan Courtemanche, Jean Macleod	4.2
Ballarat	Denise Newland	7.1
Bayside	Geoff Whiting, Sally Murray-White	8.0
Bendigo	Denis Upsall, Barb Evans, Faye Symons	3.0
Berwick	Chris Fernando	7.4
Bridge at Tivoli	Alf Branicki	5.9
Bridge Fanatics	Ben Kingham	18.2
Dendy Park	Dianna Middleton	34.7
Echuca	Wayne Leppard, Michael McQueen- Thomson	6.0
Gardenvale	Ed Hynes	15.6
Geelong	Arthur Robbins, Gary Ridgway	32.4
Kattery	Keith Kat (<i>obviously</i>)	4.9
Kooyong	Susie Hawkins	12
Lakes Entrance	Sandor Varga	2.1
Macedon Ranges	Frank Vearing	9.0
MCC	Christopher Leach	15.4
Melbourne	George Lovrecz	35.9
Moonee Valley	Kim Frazer	46.2
Mornington	Kate Bechet	5.1
OZ Bridge Club	Kailun Zhang	13.7
Phillip Island	John Sutton	14.9
RACV	Jo-Anne Heywood	8.1
Sale	Elizabeth Morrish	3.0
South Gippsland	Jean Barbour, Greg Nicholson	13.6
Traralgon	Lynne Veenstra, Louis Veenstra	3.2
VBA	Chen Ding	56.0
Wangaratta	John Nankervis, Maggie Brown	2.7
Warrnambool	Paula Bailey, Helen Lovegrove, Shane MacMillan, Allan Shiels	3.0
Waverley	Chelliah Arul	60.3
Whittlesea	Lyndall Shaw, Peter Shaw	6.3
Yarra Valley	Geoff Johnson	52.7
Yarrowonga	Jan Hackett, Tom Hackett	5.2

**BRIDGE IN SCHOOLS
VBA ANNOUNCES CO-ORDINATOR**

The VBA is pleased to announce the appointment of Michael Miller to the position of Schools Bridge Co-ordinator. Michael has extensive experience as a teacher and currently teaches bridge at University of the Third Age in a volunteer role. Michael will be building on the highly successful Schools Bridge program developed by the late Frank Power which still operates in several schools in Eastern Region.

Bridge provides benefits on many levels for children, aiding with skill development in a multitude of areas. We expect schools will also benefit from the increased skills the children develop through participation in the program.

To assist with the development of this program, Michael is seeking support from bridge players who may have contacts in the private and public school system and who would be willing to assist in setting up an initial meeting with Principals/Vice-Principals/Curriculum Coordinators. The program fits naturally with the maths-science courses and could be delivered on a weekly basis over a one to two hour timeframe. Michael is also seeking assistance from bridge players willing to take on the teaching role on a voluntary basis.

Initially, the target number of schools in the first half of the year is three, preferably located in the Southern suburbs of Melbourne. Michael can be contacted by email at horriem@gmail.com or mobile 0412 125 803.

As mentioned above, nowhere does the Bridge in Schools program work better than in the Eastern Region. The following was published in November in the East Gippsland News:

On Monday, five primary schools competed for the Frank Power Memorial Shield at Bairnsdale Bridge Club.

The schools involved were St Mary's, West Bairnsdale, Paynesville, Swan Reach and Eagle Point, with all barring one of the schools represented by two teams.

The Bridge in Schools program was introduced about six years ago by the late Frank Power, initially involving two schools. Today the program is being taught in five local primary schools.

The schools involved have given a one-hour session, one day a week, as an extension to their maths program.

Bairnsdale Bridge Club has a dedicated group of bridge players who conduct the sessions.

The students would normally play about five to six boards during that period. On Monday those students played 27 boards over a three-and-a-half hour period.

They are to be commended for their endurance and focus. It is not easy to maintain focus and concentration for that period of time.

The successful team and winner of the shield was St Mary's No. 1 team, with runners-up Eagle Point No. 2 team.

"I would like to sincerely thank all the participating schools, their teachers and our very own bridge players who have taught and tutored the students throughout the year. Your help and dedication to the program is ensuring its on-going success," program coordinator, Bev Fisher, said.

"Bridge is a wonderful game for all ages. It's a great way to keep mentally fit, meet new friends and enjoy playing cards.

"It helps keep your memory active and brain alert. It requires you to use mathematics, strategy and concentration and most of all improves inferential reasoning."



Bairnsdale West and St Mary's students slug it out

EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS

There are many ways to learn about bridge. Here are some activities available in the coming months for Victorian bridge players or potential bridge players.

Learn Bridge

Crash Course in Bridge



Beginner Lessons 2016

Love a challenge? Like to have fun?

BEGINNER'S BRIDGE LESSONS

(the world's most popular mind sport)

The next 1 day course will be held on SATURDAY 13th February, 2016
131 Poath Road, Murrumbena

Cost \$40 per person - Lunch included - 10.30am to 4pm

Registrations essential - clachman@vba.asn.au or 9530-9006

Learn Bridge On-Line

Dan Phelan, a VBA member with a background in tertiary education, teaches bridge at Glen Eira U3A, and has set up a website for learning how to play bridge.

Visit: <http://www.gleneirau3abridge.com/> to discover more.

Beginners Lessons

Waverley Bridge Club, the state's largest club, regularly holds Beginners Courses.

The next one is due to start on Tuesday afternoon 29th March (it is also taught simultaneously on the following Wednesday evenings).

Contact Mary Elson on 9807 6502 for more details.

Improve Your Bridge

Two Bridge Workshops with Joan Butts

Saturday 19th March at Geelong Bridge Club.

Workshop 1 – 10.00 am to 12.00 pm
Modern Competitive Bidding with Distributional Hands

12.00 to 1.00 – Lunch

Workshop 2 – 1.00 pm to 3.00 pm
Keeping our Defensive Communications and Interfering with Declarer

Both workshops will be multi-level, suitable for regular players. Come with or without a partner to any number of sessions

Cost: \$15 per head per workshop

Bookings essential:
phone Dorothy Read on 0427 626 370, or email dotgeoffread@gmail.com.

Bridge Workshop with Andy Hung International Representative & Private Coach

Sunday 28th February 1.30 to 4.00, at the VBA Clubrooms, 131 Poath Road, Murrumbena.

\$25 per person – no partner required.

Come and learn the secrets and hidden gems to pre-emptive bidding.

When, How High – How do experts handle pre-empts.

Want to know the biggest danger about pre-empting? Surprisingly, it isn't the pre-emptive bid itself!

Lecture * Hands-on Play * Discussion * Notes

To register: email clachman@vba.asn.au or call the VBA at 9530 9006.

Improvers Workshops

Waverley Bridge Club runs regular "Improvers Workshops" on Saturday mornings from 9:30 am to 12 pm. Cost is \$15 for WBC members; \$17 for visitors.

- February 6: Stayman
- February 13: Transfers
- February 20: Pre-emptive bidding
- February 27: Negative Doubles
- March 5: Reverses

Learn the 2-over-1 System

Improve the accuracy of your bidding in one easy step by adding "2-over-1 game forcing" principles to your system. This full-day workshop with Bill Jacobs will teach you all you need to know to play the world's most popular expert system.

Saturday March 19th from 10 am to 4 pm. Cost is \$35 with a barbeque lunch included.

Contact Mary Elson on 9807 6502 for more details.

Teaching Bridge

Professional Development day for bridge teachers

Sunday 20th March, 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. at Geelong Bridge Club.

This ABF-sponsored event is presented by Joan Butts. Workshop includes:

Teaching Defence, Conventions and Competitive Bidding

Interactive lessons with teacher and student exercise.

- Lunch provided
- Materials provided by ABF

Bookings essential: phone Dorothy Read on 0427 626 370, or email dotgeoffread@gmail.com.

This workshop is limited to 18 tables.

Pointless Trivia

"Is there any research on the average rate of defeated contracts at duplicate bridge?"

The American star Richard Pavlicek analysed some 80,000 results from recent American National Championships and World Championships.

The outcome was that 65%, or just under two-thirds, of all contracts made.

With such a large sample size, that certainly answers a question. But does it answer *the* question, about an average duplicate session? At an expert or world class level, about 65% of all contracts make.

But at the average local duplicate level, do you think the percentage of contracts made would be lower or higher than that?

THE TWELFTH TRICK

Dir: South ♠ KQ
 Vul: all ♥ A9
 ♦ K8643
 ♣ AQ92

N
S

♠ A82
 ♥ KQ7
 ♦ AQ2
 ♣ J653

West	North	East	South
Pass	6NT	All pass	1NT

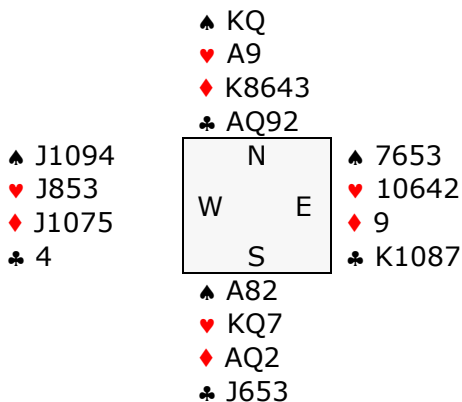
West leads ♠J. You win and cash the ace and queen of diamonds, but East discards a spade on the second round.

If the clubs are good for 3 tricks, you still have your contract: 3 tricks in each suit. But with your luck, the clubs are foul as well.

So what do you do?

Solution over page.

THE TWELFTH TRICK



If clubs are 3-2, there's no problem setting up three tricks there. You can also handle any bad club break with 100% certainty.

Lead to the ♣A and then play a small club from dummy. If East shows out, you can subsequently finesse against West's ♣10.

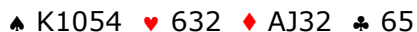
More likely, West is short in clubs. East will have to play low on the second round of the suit (otherwise he concedes three club tricks), and your jack will win.

Having snaffled a second club trick, return to the diamonds, playing a third and fourth round. West wins but has no clubs to play. Your contract is safe with 3 spades, 3 hearts, 4 diamonds and 2 clubs.



TIP OF THE MONTH

Suppose you pick up:



It's an ordinary sort of hand. Partner is dealer and the auction starts:

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
	1♠	4♥	?

You would have been happy to support partner to 2♠ (the bid you would have made if RHO had passed), or even in a pinch, 3♠. But 4♠? That's too much of a good thing, isn't it?

How does one resolve decisions like this? Here's a tip:

When in doubt, bid 4♠ over their 4♥

This is a Nike-style concept: Just Do It.

The reason it seems to work so well is that there are three separate ways the 4♠ bid can work out well for you:

1. 4♠ might make, or
2. 4♥ might be making, in which case 4♠ should be a paying sacrifice, or
3. Neither contract makes, but the opponents err and go on to 5♥, which goes down

Conversely, there's only one losing scenario: neither contract makes and you are left to play 4♠ going down. So in summary, there are more ways for the 4♠ bid to win than to lose.

It's a strong tip: in auctions like the one given, the 4♥ is often thought of as a 'left-handed transfer': a transfer bid just begging your left-hand opponent to complete it and bid 4♠. They call spades 'the boss suit', and this is why ... so if you have the spades, then flaunt them!



SELECTING VICTORIA'S OPEN, WOMEN'S AND SENIORS TEAMS FOR 2016

A reminder that in 2016, Victoria's open, women's and seniors teams will be selected by pairs trials. One important reason for this is that the ANC (Australian National Championships) is being held earlier than usual, starting on 25 June.

The open selection finals will be held on 19-20 March, the seniors' on 9-10 April and the women's on 16-17 April.

Entry to all three selection finals will be determined by VQPs won in the year to 7 March, 2016, with places reserved for up to three regional representatives in the seniors' and women's selection finals. (For the open, the regional representatives are offered a place in the Butler finals, which will be held on 5-6 March.) A maximum of 12 pairs will contest each selection final.

BLACK MAGIC IN THE 1970s
E. L. Field

When an opponent makes a rather unusual play against you, take some time out to ask yourself what is going on? Sometimes the ensuing battle of wits produces some surprising results.

♠ 1054			
♥ AKJ107			
♦ 54			
♣ A82			
♠ 9	N	♠ AK3	
♥ 96543	W E	♥ Q	
♦ 983		♦ AQJ1072	
♣ J963	S	♣ 1054	
		♠ QJ8762	
		♥ 82	
		♦ K6	
		♣ KQ7	

West	North	East	South
		1♦	1♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

This hand was dealt in a rubber game – and goes to show that things can happen even when it isn't a par game.

South felt that he had more than the minimum requirements for an overcall, and promptly bid game over North's jump-raise in spades. Note that North did not bother to mention his hearts when holding three cards in support of his partner's major suit overcall. He knew that South had at least a 5-card suit and if he did not raise immediately, he would by implication deny three-card support.

The declarer won the first trick with his diamond king after East has played ♦10. Instead of asking himself why East had not gone up with the ace, a card which he obviously held – for West had led the ♦9, South led his ♠Q at trick two. East won with the ♠K and led his singleton ♥Q. This was won in dummy and a spade was led, which was taken by East with the ace. He now led the ♦2 and East found himself taking the trick with the ♦8. He recovered from his astonishment and knew why he was in. He fired back a heart and torpedoed the contract.

Although one must give East full credit for a brilliant defence, a little thought by South would have averted this disaster. South can see that he has only three possible losers: two trumps and one diamond, and the only danger is a ruff, probably by East.

Accordingly declarer can do his best to sever communications between the East-West hands, and particularly into West, by returning a diamond at trick two. He thereby gives West his entry before he can use it to give East his ruff.

Not many South players would see this play. Would you?

Editor's note: this article appeared in the July 1970 VBA Newsletter; it was unearthed by Meredith Woods who is exploring the history of the VBA. We really do not know who E. L. Field was. If any member has recollections or knowledge of E. L. Field, please contact the VBA.

ABOUT NOT BIDDING GAME
Ben Thompson

How often do you see a hand where *both* partners have a 2♣ opening and yet they miss game? Traian Chira and I managed it in the Open Butler at the VBA last month.

Dir: East	♠ J1063	
Vul: E/W	♥ Q542	
	♦ A8	
	♣ J62	
♠ K5	N	♠ AQ2
♥ 1096	W E	♥ 87
♦ 10	S	♦ KQJ6542
♣ AQ108753		♣ 4
		♠ 9874
		♥ AKJ3
		♦ 973
		♣ K9

"Say what?" you say? Let me explain. For us, 2♣ shows 11-15 points with 6 cards in *either* minor. Traian opened 2♣ as East, South doubled, and I passed enthusiastically with my 2♣ opener. North took out the takeout double and Traian competed to 3♦. We all passed unenthusiastically and Traian wrapped up an easy 10 tricks in short order.

2015 McCutcheon Awards

The McCutcheon award goes to the player who earns the most masterpoints in the calendar year. It rewards a mix of skill and stamina!

This year's winner was Warren Lazer from Sydney, with an incredible 516 masterpoints. His partner in bridge (and life), Pauline Gumby, came second with 512 masterpoints. It's easy to see a potential marital problem there.

Third was Melbourne's Justin Howard with 456 masterpoints. Unfortunately he didn't win any at all for coming 3rd in the European Championships – that's the whole of Europe. (To understand just how good this result was, in the round of 16, he beat a pair that was subsequently proved to be cheating.) It just doesn't seem fair, but of course the McCutcheon Awards is not all about fairness.

Here are the Victorians who finished in the top 10 of the various National categories:

Grand Masters

1	Justin Howard	Alphington
5	Peter Hollands	Waverley
6	Stephen Weisz	VBA

Gold Life Masters

6	Denise Clarke	Geelong
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Silver Life Masters

4	Frank Vearing	Macedon Ranges
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Bronze Life Masters

1	Jean Barbour	Phillip Island
7	John Yang	VBA

*National Masters

6	Greg Nicholson	Phillip Island
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National Masters

6	Faye Symons	Bendigo
9	Sandor Varga	Lakes Entrance
10	Gus Ghali	Moonee Valley

*State Masters

4	Denis Upsall	Bendigo
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*Regional Masters

2	Jenny Gray	Waverley
3	Martin Simons	VBA
10	Peter McConnell	Gardenvale

Regional Masters

5	Alan Sims	Phillip Island
6	Warren Cousins	Waverley

**Local Masters

4	Louise McKenna	Dendy Park
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Local Masters

8	Elizabeth Ryan	Dendy Park
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Club Masters

1	Chen Ding	VBA
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Graduate Masters

1	Prithiraj de Zoysa	Waverley
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Nil Masters

2	Elza Schilling	Dendy Park
4	Kailun Zhang	VBA
9	Sylvia Gluck	Bridge Fanatics

Pointless Trivia

"Is there any research on the average rate of defeated contracts at duplicate bridge?"

Whilst at the national and international levels, it seems that about 65% of all contracts make, we think that the success rate would be *higher* at the average club duplicate?

The reason for this counter-intuitive view? Duplicate players simply don't bid as much as expert players. Expert bidding is more forward, more optimistic; the average duplicate player more cautious. And whilst the average player might not play the cards as well as the expert, neither does his opponents defend the hand as well as the expert's opponents.

Experienced players also know all about going down in a contract for a good score, because the opponents could have got more points by making their contract.

The saying is "Down one is good bridge" – a gross generalisation, but with some sound logic behind it.

Richard Pavlicek's web-site (<http://www.rpbridge.net>) has a lot of other fascinating data. For example, did you know that the three most commonly played contracts are:

3NT:	19%
4♠:	15%
4♥:	13%

(The next is 1NT, a long way back at 6%.)

Why is 4♠ played more often than 4♥? Because good players like to bid 4♠ over 4♥, of course.