

Victorian Bridge Association Bulletin

September 2021

Editor: Dee Harley

**VBA PRESIDENT
CHRISTOPHER LEACH**



Social and club bridge players are the core of our game and bridge is a wonderful activity at any level. It is a completely normal approach to play once or twice a week, get a little mental exercise and have a nice social experience.... and be very content with that as part of life's rich tapestry. Indeed, over 80% of all our bridge exponents in Australia happily fit into that category.

Yet, I am asked quite often by certain club bridge players who are a little more ambitious, what areas of the game they should be concentrating on and what are the key skills which assist a process of transition from duplicate play to becoming a more solid advanced player. In Victorian terms, this would mean reaching the stage of playing competitively in club congresses and perhaps dipping a toe in the water at some of the

events we run at the VBA throughout the year, especially on Monday nights.

Now while this seems a perfectly sensible and appropriate question, it is actually not easy to answer. If you asked a range of our top players, for example, what is the main area where more average players could make a big difference, you would get a divergence of views for sure. Older players would often say that playing the cards well is a huge advantage, which assists you to keep your system comparatively simple, while young guns will say "it's a bidder's game." Everybody agrees about the importance of defence. So, having checked in with a few luminaries of the Victorian bridge world, I have compiled the following, by-no-means-complete list for you (and better still you and your partner together... the best partnerships unite players of equal ambition) which I hope may be helpful in the rather exacting, but fun process of lifting your game to the next level:

1) For card play, everyone agrees there is one incomparable resource.... Bridgemaster. This extraordinary program is available on BBO. Just log in and press the "Practice" tab and then "Bridgemaster". You will want to concentrate on Levels 2 and 3. The program is designed so that you can't play out any hand without following the correct technique. It is amazing, but prepare to be challenged... and frustrated at times.

2) Learn to count. Whether you are Declarer or defending, it is very often essential to get a count on your opponents' hands. This is hard work at first, but gives you a huge advantage straight off the bat over the vast majority of intermediate players who simply don't count at all. One of my favourite bridge sites is Karen's Bridge Library (KW bridge).which is full of wonderful stuff, but her section on "Counting the Hand" (in two parts) is a masterpiece.

3) Have lessons on defence. Many of our best teachers in Victoria are formidable defenders.

Spending some time and money with your partner learning from experts in this most difficult part of the game is money well spent. But for sure they will emphasize counting and also signalling. Developing a system of signalling with partner is a very important step in advancing play. A good teacher can explain how this works and the myriad of advantages it gives you over a pair that don't signal.

4) Don't waste time on advanced techniques that rarely come up. I have seen intermediates (I have been guilty of this as well) trying to read books on squeeze technique while not knowing the best way to play constantly recurring card combinations or do more advanced finesses. If you are so inclined and want to pick up useful advanced techniques, then learn about endplays (which occur a lot) and all that goes with them. David Bird's book on endplays (which takes in all that stuff you hear better players talk about like stripping the hand, throw-ins, trump coups etc etc) is fantastic. It has a funny title: "Bridge Endplays for Everyone... Even You."

Finally, I would say, "play lots of hands". Whether via BBO with the robots or the program I use ... Jack... which comes with hundreds of tournaments and their hands in its memory and the capacity to use Professor Jack to guide you through the correct play sequence if you can't get a hand to make, it is good to practise every day you can in both a guided and unguided (fun) way.

Enough from me with this necessarily short and incomplete list. But I leave you with one thought (and this applies to other demanding tasks like language learning). We live in an age where computers and their programming give us an incomparable range of options and methods to learn and improve in high-level activities like bridge. Previous generations had nothing like it. But the portion of advanced players has probably barely changed. I'll leave you to draw the necessary conclusions, but, in any era, there is obviously no substitute for time, effort and desire. Enjoy the process.

Christopher Leach

HAND TO PLAY

TP has been entertaining me recently by sending me some problems and (later) some newspaper article clippings giving solutions. He sent me this hand which I am sharing with you for your joy. I love this hand!

The problem presented to me was:

Dir: West ♠ Q3
 Vul: Both ♥ 10654
 ♦ Q876
 ♣ 1085

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ ? ♠ ?
 ♥ ?9? ♥ ??
 ♦ J? ♦ ?9?
 ♣ ? ♣ ?

♠ 972
 ♥ AKJ7
 ♦ A
 ♣ AKQJ4

Contract 4♥
 Lead: ♦J

The bidding:

W	N	E	S
Pass	Pass	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

You get the ♦J lead which you win and cash the ♥A with everyone following. Can you see how you might go down? And if so, can you see how to avoid it? Decide on your play before looking at the discussion of the solution on [Page 5](#)

COMEDY

Partner! every day you play worse than the day before. Today you are playing as if it is tomorrow already.

PLAY PROBLEM #20 – CORRECTION!

Let me just remind everyone that I said I had a set of problems with no solutions. Some are more difficult than others. Last month my proffered solution to problem 20 was not bad, but it certainly had room for improvement:

Here is a possible layout:

Dir: West	♠ J632		
Vul: E/W	♥ AQ2		
	♦ A6		
	♣ KQJ2		
♠ 8			♠ K109
♥ J87643?			♥ 105
♦ KQJ10			♦ 7432
♣ 87			♣ 6543
	♠ AQ754		
	♥ K9		
	♦ 985		
	♣ A109		

Contract 6♠

Lead: ♦K

There was no opposition bidding.

The play to the first three tricks is as follows:

T1: Win the ♦A (East follows with the ♦7)

T2: ♠2, ♠9, ♠Q, ♠8

T2: ♠A, ♥4, ♠3, ♠10

So, East has a guaranteed trump trick. Can you still make this?

TP and I went so far in our logic, however the salient fact is that for any solution to work, East must have at least three clubs. So the correct order of play must be to cash three rounds of clubs. Should West turn up with a doubleton (or fewer) you know that you can safely cash four rounds of clubs (West has no trumps), then you can start on the hearts. On this line of play you will make anytime East has 3 or more clubs, and three hearts (or even if East has more than three clubs and only 2 hearts).

Two readers brought this to my attention. Thanks, to you both, I would much rather have provided the correct solution the first time, but I appreciate your input. A good learning process!

RESULTS

GNOT Heat

- 1 Ben Thompson - Laura Ginnan - Pete Hollands - Simon Hinge - Stephen Lester
2. Kim Hoff - Jenny Hoff - Penny Corrigan - Maggie Callander
3. Stan Klofa - Lindsey Robinson - Stephen Weisz - Robert Gallus - George Lovrecz

Victor Champion Cup (RealBridge online)

Swiss Pairs

1. Tony Nunn & Paul Dalley
2. George Kozakos & Phil Gue
3. Helena Dawson & David Weston

Swiss Teams

1. Susan Humphries, Jessica Brake, Liam Milne, Andy Hung
2. James Coutts, Justin Mill, Ellena Moskovsky, Matt McManus
3. Helena Dawson, David Weston, Richard Douglas, Bob Sebesfi,

VBA Swiss Pairs

- 1 Robert Gallus & Stephen Weisz
- 2 Neil Ewart & Simon Henbest
- 3 Serhat Ozenir & Bulent Kaytaz

COMING EVENTS

Waverley Bridge club are hosting a three week red point event on RealBridge

Tuesday 14th, 21st & 28th September 2021

Cost: \$60 per pair

Starting time: 7:30 PM

Contact office@waverleybridgeclub.com.au or visit

<https://www.bridgewebs.com/waverley/>

**VALE: MARGARET BOURKE
11 Nov 1945 – 6 Aug 2021**



Margaret passed away on Saturday after a 3-year fight against Stage IV melanoma.

Margaret was one of the most successful players in Australia and at the time of her death was 6th on the list of all time Masterpoint winners with 11,619 points.

Margaret was born in Canberra to John Cumpston, a career diplomat, and Helen Cumpston, a university administrator at the ANU. For her tertiary education she moved to Melbourne where she became involved in bridge, and met her future husband Tim.

Success came early, representing Victoria at the ANC for the first time in 1973. By the time she and Tim moved to Canberra in 1989 to join the Commonwealth Public Service, Margaret had represented Victoria in the Women's Team 13 times at the ANC plus once as npc, winning 6 times, as well as a win in the State Mixed Pairs in 1981, and the State Open Teams in 1982.

Once settled in Canberra, success continued at the ANC with 8 Women's Teams for two wins,

plus a win as npc, 10 Open Teams for 2 wins, plus one win as npc, and 4 Senior Teams for two wins, plus twice as npc. As well she won 7 State Open Teams, 1 open Pairs and 7 mixed pairs.

Margaret was proud of her 47 continual years of attendance at the ANC. However, her best performance was representing Australia on 31 occasions, currently more than any other player. These included 15 at World Championships, and 15 times at Asia Pacific Championships, including 3 wins. As well she won 74 wins in other national tournaments. Over the years Margaret had many partners. However, her favourite partner was Lidia Beech with whom she won many events.

Once retired, she threw herself into voluntary work, both at ABF headquarters in Canberra, and the Canberra Senior Citizens book fair for which she was the chief organizer for many years.

**VALE: DR BILL BENNETT
19 APRIL 1918 – 17 AUG 2021**



It is with great sadness that I pass on the news that Dr Bill Bennett passed away peacefully on the 17th August, 2021.

Bill was a long time member of the VBA and Waverley Bridge Clubs, playing his last game with us in 2019. At the time, Bill revealed that it was because his eyesight was failing that he

had to abandon the game he loved playing for more than 80 years. We remember fondly his 100th birthday celebrations at the club.

Bill was a fine player who epitomised gentlemanly conduct at the table, where he displayed an amazing ability to overcome his failing sight. When his dummy was tabled, his partner would call out the hand to him, one suit at a time. Bill was then able to play the hand skillfully and accurately using only his recall of this singular recitation.

Bill was a family GP in Cheltenham for over 30 years, a skilled cabinet maker and in his younger years a keen squash and golf player.

Bill was the loved husband of Jean (dec.), father of David and Jane, father-in-law to Margaret, grandfather of Megan, Alison and Stephen, great grandfather to Charlotte. He was a dear friend to many players at both clubs, and especially to Nicole McManamny over many years.

HAND TO PLAY (DISCUSSION)

On [Page 2](#) you were asked how you would play 4♥.

The hand was:

Dir: West	♠ Q3		♠ K1065
Vul: Both	♥ 10654		♥ 32
	♦ Q876		♦ K52
	♣ 1085		♣ 9762
♠ AJ84		W	
♥ Q98		N	
♦ J10943		E	
♣ 7		S	
	♠ 972		
	♥ AKJ7		
	♦ A		
	♣ AKQJ4		

Lead: ♦ J

So, after my attempts to play this hand, TP sent me a newspaper cutting showing how declarer found a line which enabled TP sitting West to defeat the contract.

The bidding:

W	N	E	S
Pass	Pass	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

Given the ♦ J lead which you win and cash the ♥ A with everyone following. Declarer tried to cover all options, played a spade to the ♠ Q and ♠ K and East returned a club (knowing from the bidding that South had 5 or 6 clubs). Declarer won in dummy and took the losing heart finesse, and TP (West) now underlead his ♠ AJ to get his partner on lead with the ♠ 10 so he could give TP a club ruff. One in the soup!

Declarer perhaps mismanaged the play, whilst TP was quick to take advantage of the loophole. However, it remains to be seen what line should be adopted by declarer. What did you decide? You have to worry about possible 4-1 trump breaks as well as being able to handle all 3-2 breaks. For example, playing ♥ AK and a third heart will fail when trumps are 4-1 if the defender wins the ♥ Q and returns another trump since you will only have 9 tricks. Playing just one top heart and then the ♥ J will cope with all the 3-2 breaks (given no other outrageous splits), since you can safely draw the last trump and claim your tricks.

I like the play of one top heart only, followed by the ♥ J.

If the suit breaks 4-1 and the defence play a diamond you can ruff low, cash the last top heart from hand, cross to the ♣ 10 to pull the last trump, however if instead they try to force dummy in spades you can ruff the third round in dummy and again draw trumps.

The only issue (on 4-1 break) is when the defence return a trump, as you need at least one ruff to make your contract. I can't see a way to wangle a ruff, and also have the entries to subsequently draw the rest of the trumps.

Perhaps someone will come up with a better play! Please let me hear from you if you do!

PLAY PROBLEM #21 SOLUTION

Last month you had to make 4♠ on this hand?

Dir: West ♠ K872
 Vul: E/W ♥ K76
 ♦ A7642
 ♣ 5

N		
W		E
	S	

♠ ? ♠ ?
 ♥ ? ♥ ?
 ♦ ? ♦ ?
 ♣ 6? ♣ ?

♠ Q654
 ♥ AQJ
 ♦ 985
 ♣ AK2

Contract 4♠
 Lead: ♣6

Bidding

W	N	E	S
		1♣	1NT
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

East opened the bidding, so must have most of the points. Since I don't have the answers, I'm on best guess here. How would I play it ?

I guess East is fairly flat, and the contract will not make if we lose 2 diamonds and 2 spades, or if we lose one diamond and three spades.

To restrict diamond losers to one would require East to have ♦KQ doubleton, or ♦K and another diamond, and not unblock the suit.

I would win the club and cash the other top club throwing a heart (deceptive). Then I would ruff the third club in dummy. Here I cash the ♦A and lead a small spade towards my hand. East must probably duck, and now I cash three rounds of hearts ending in my hand. If all has gone well I can now exit with my diamond. East is fairly endplayed, and if he can cash another diamond, then I have to play him for the doubleton ♠A.

PLAY PROBLEM #22

Another challenging 4♠ for you to make...

Dir: North ♠ AQ76
 Vul: N/S ♥ A32
 ♦ A7654
 ♣ 7

N		
W		E
	S	

♠ ? ♠ ?
 ♥ ? ♥ ?
 ♦ K? ♦ ?
 ♣ ? ♣ ?

♠ KJ109
 ♥ 984
 ♦ 2
 ♣ A10865

Contract 4♠
 Lead: ♦K
 Bidding

W	N	E	S
	1♦	Pass	1♠
2♣	3♠	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

How are you going to make this one?

Send me the best line please:
dee_harley@hotmail.com

Suit Combination:

This month you hold J7 opposite your partner's K9432

How would you play this suit for 3 tricks?

What about for 2 tricks?

Care to estimate your chances of success each time?

Assume you have plenty of entries to both hands.

Decide how you would play before peeking at the [Solution](#) on [P7](#)

♣♣♣ **KNAVE OF CLUBS** ♣♣♣
HOLD-UP

The hold-up play is a common theme in no trump play. The defenders lead a suit where declarer holds Axxx opposite xx and declarer may hold up to the third round of the suit to stop one defender playing the fourth round. A similar technique can appear in suit play.

Consider this hand which appeared in a club teams game. Both declarers reached 4♥ by the same auction. The 2♠ bid showed exactly three trumps and invitational, or better, values. With four, or more, trumps, the bid would have been 2NT with an expectation of normal Jacoby responses. Since North was unlikely to have many wasted values opposite the singleton spade, the raise to game was easy. Those who use Losing Trick Count would see the South hand as 6 losers and, therefore, better than a minimum (7 loser) opener.

At each table, West began with the king and ace of spades, while East signaled an odd number of cards in the suit.

Teams:

Dir: South	♠ 8532	♠ 964				
Vul: All	♥ KJ5	♥ 4				
	♦ A74	♦ Q1085				
	♣ A10	♣ K8542				
♠ AKQJ7	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 0 10px;">N</td><td style="padding: 0 10px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 0 10px;">W</td><td style="padding: 0 10px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	E	W	S	♠ 10
N	E					
W	S					
♥ 8632		♥ AQ1097				
♦ J92		♦ K63				
♣ 7		♣ QJ93				

Bidding:

W	N	E	S
-			1♥
1♠	2♠	Pass	4♥
All Pass			

Lead: ♠K

The first declarer ruffed the second spade, drew trumps and ran the queen of clubs. When

East won with the king of clubs and was able to produce a spade, this declarer finished up with only eight tricks. The problem is to find an analogue to the NT hold-up play so that East does not have a spade to return late in the play.

The second declarer showed the correct technique. He discarded a diamond loser on the second round of spades. Now when he ruffed the third round of spades, East was exhausted in spades. Declarer drew trumps in four rounds before running the queen of clubs to East's king. However, this was not the disaster which the first declarer suffered as East had no spades left. As it did not matter which minor suit East returned, declarer claimed ten tricks through five trumps, two diamonds and three clubs. Discarding the diamond at trick two was a pretty loser-on-loser play to enable three rounds of spades to be played before the dangerous club finesse had to be taken. This caters for trumps being 4-1 and the king of clubs being offside.

Solution to Suit Combination (6)

This month you hold J7 opposite your partner's K9432

Needing 3 tricks: You really need to find the suit breaking 3-3 with the Ace onside – That would do it alright, however there are a couple of extra situations so you would start by leading the 7 and if LHO plays low, insert the 9! This helps when LHO didn't split from Q10x. Note that if LHO does split from Q10x you will still make 3 tricks, losing just to the Ace and the Queen. Overall this works out at 28.42%

Needing 2 tricks: Two tricks ain't so tough! Play low towards the Knave, if that loses to the queen, you now lead the 7 and play the nine if LHO doesn't play an honour. Two tricks quite likely at 75.9%

PENNANT TROPHY

The Pennant Teams Competition starts on 8th September through to 13th October. At this stage we do not know if it is F2F or online.

History of the Pennant

The 1st Pennant was held in 1934, organised by the Victorian Bridge Association. Australia's leading pair Champion-Goldberg won the first three Pennants playing the Pachabo system. 48 teams entered that inaugural Pennant – 16 in the A division (with the winner to become the Victorian team for the Interstate championship), 24 in the B division, and 18 in the ladies section. The format was a double round-robin qualifying to semi-finals. The "home and away" borrowed its scoring from football (4-2-0 Victory Points and percentage of points for vs against to break ties)! The details of this year's event as it stands at the moment can be found on the VBA home page.

FORMAT: Stage One (6 weeks preliminary qualifying) either:

12 x 14-board matches in a Round-Robin format within each of two groups (with possibly some seeded cross-over); or:

18 x 9-board matches in a Round-Robin format within a single group.

QUALIFIERS: The five teams progressing from the Preliminary (two from each Qualifying Group, plus the best third* placed team) will participate in the Semi-Finals on Saturday 23rd November.

The Semi-Finals (with screens) will be a Round-Robin consisting of 5 x 12-board matches. The other team that will participate in the Semi-Finals will be determined from a Regional Play-off.

The Final 2-team Knockout on Sunday 24th November will consist of 4 x 16-board stanzas.

* This will be the team that is 'closest' to the 2nd placed team in its own group.

SCORING: IMPs to VPs using the appropriate 14-board WBF Scale (Qualifying) and 12-board WBF Scale (Round-of-Six).

FEES: \$20.00 per player per session (Qualifying)

\$23.00 per player per session (Weekend Finals)

TIMES: 92 minutes per 14-Board (Qualifying).

SEATING: Toss for rights.

TIES: [Normal VBA regulations apply](#)

SLOW PLAY and LATENESS: Offending teams may be fined for either offence.

SUBSTITUTES: [Current VBA Substitution Regulations](#)

Please sign up for this honour board event.

EDITORIAL

Turbulent times again! In Victoria the Covid situation has worsened again. However the vaccination rate is slowly getting to a position where we may hope to have live play by next year! I watched some UK football matches today and from what I could see the crowds have returned and they appear to have control of the situation.

Meanwhile a furore has arisen in European bridge where the Italian team contained a player formerly banned for cheating. Every single team scheduled to play against Italy refused to play. You can read about this on the [bridgewinners](#) site.

In the VBA itself there are some good going discussions on the future of the club and of course the future of the state bridge association. More news will be forthcoming soon.

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